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ABSTRACT

A training program designed to teach high school students to be specific in their writing is described in this booklet. The first section of the booklet explains the three stages of the program: (1) daily practice in translating a "telling" sentence into a "showing" paragraph; (2) application of "showing" writing to the editing and revision process; and (3) the study of particular techniques to improve specificity. The second section of the booklet describes a study conducted to test the effectiveness of the training program. Among the reported findings are: a concentrated training program can make a significant contribution to students' writing skills, and students are less likely to transfer specific techniques to their usual writing style if those techniques are not systematically reinforced in a variety of ways in all phases of the instructional program. Appendixes contain a copy of the writing test used in the study and student writing samples. (FL)

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SHOWING-WRITING

A TRAINING PROGRAM TO HELP STUDENTS BE SPECIFIC

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Preface

A teacher we know once complained, "Writing textbooks need not devote so much space to topic sentences. My God, when my students write paragraphs, *every* sentence is a topic sentence." His complaint is the complaint of every writing teacher who has spent thousands of hours writing "Be specific" "Give an example" in the margins of countless student compositions.

In this monograph, Rebekah Caplan offers a solution to this problem in the form of a training program to teach students to be specific. Rebekah's training program takes students through three developmental stages: first, daily practice in translating a *telling* sentence to a *showing* paragraph; next, application of showing-writing to the editing and revision process; and finally, the study of particular techniques to improve specificity.

In Part Two, Catharine Keech, BAWP research assistant, describes the experimental study she and Rebekah conducted to test the effectiveness of this training program. Rebekah and two other teachers each used the program with an experimental class, and each also taught a control class. Students in all classes wrote pretest and posttest essays which were scored and analyzed. The results of this study tell us much about effective teaching of writing techniques. They show that a concentrated training program with a specific aim can make a significant contribution to students' writing skills. They also show that students are less likely to transfer specific techniques to their usual writing style if these techniques are not systematically reinforced in a variety of ways in all phases of the instructional program.

James Gray, Director
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I.

The Training Program

Rebekah Caplan

Year after year we make student writers cringe with the reminder to "be specific." We write in margins next to bracketed passages "explain," "describe." We extend arrows over words, under words, circling around and through words, accompanying them with the captions "What do you mean? Needs more detail; unclear." When we compose essay questions for exams, we underline the "why or why not" at the end of the question *twice* so that our students might feel the importance of that part of the response. Recently I talked with one teacher who had designed a rubber stamp which bore the words "Give an example," so that he would not have to scribble the phrase again and again.

The assumption behind this writing program is that most students have not been trained to *show what they mean*. By training, I do not mean the occasional exercises taken from composition texts, nor do I mean the experience gained by writing perhaps eight major essays over the course of a semester. What I mean by training is the performing of a daily mental warm-up, short and rigorous, not unlike the training routines of musicians, dancers, athletes. Six years ago, while teaching reading and composition in a suburban middle school, I realized the important connection between disciplined practice in the "arts" and the need for it in a writing program. My first students were eighth graders, and not knowing precisely what the junior high school student needed to learn about writing, I experimented for a while.

For approximately three weeks I assigned a potpourri of writing exercises, examining the papers carefully for common prob-

lems or strengths. I wanted to determine what the eighth grader already knew about good writing and how far I might expect to take him. It was not difficult to discover in those first few weeks of my teaching career that although students *did* write with enthusiasm and energy, not many of them wrote with color or sound or texture. In a description of a student's favorite movie I would read: "It was fantastic because it was so real!" For a strange person: "He is so weird." For a favorite friend: "She has the most fantastic personality."

The underlinings proved their earnestness, their sincerity. I attacked these "empty" descriptions, however, inscribing in the margins those same suggestions that teachers have "stamped out" for years. In class, I passed out models of rich description--character sketches by Steinbeck, settings by Twain, abstract ideas by Bradbury. I advised the students, as they scanned the model and glanced back at their own papers, that they needed to be *that* explicit, *that* good. *That* was what writing was all about. I said, "I know that you know what makes a thunderstorm so frightening. I know that you know the same things Mark Twain knows about a thunderstorm. Now what details did he use?" And we would list "the trees swaying" and the sky turning "blue-black" until we had every last descriptive word classified on the board. "And now," I continued, "you describe a beautiful sunset in the same way that Twain describes the storm..."

The writings from such follow-up assignments were admittedly better, but without the prepping, without fussing and reminding, I could not get students to remember to use specifics naturally, on their own. With growing frustration I tried to examine my history as a student writer. I wanted to track down what it had been like for me to write in the eighth grade, and what it was like now. I wanted to uncover when it was that I had reached a turning point or gained a sense of discovery about language and expression. When I tried to recall my own junior high experience, however, I could not remember one assignment, let alone any instruction in writing. What I did remember was signing autograph

books and passing notes in class, recording memories in diaries and signing slam books. These sorts of writings mattered the most. We cared deeply about who was one's friend and who was one's enemy, who was loved, who was hated, who was worthy of secrets, who was not. And as these issues came under judgment we based our verdict on the degree of someone's *good personality.* In fact, the supreme compliment one paid a friend in an autograph book amounted to "fantastic personality." And it is still so today.

This memory struck me as being significant. The notion that each person has a personality that is *separate* from his looks, his dress, or his wealth is a new thought to the junior high school student. I remember using that same phrase, "a great personality," with fresh, original intentions in diaries and school papers. My friends and I were intrigued by the idea of personality more than any other. We were fascinated by people's differences, yet we could not say exactly what made us like one person and dislike another. Could it be, then, that I was demanding writing that my students weren't ready to produce? It seemed crucial to respect their excitement over many of these cliched discoveries. I had to allow room for naive, exploratory generalizations, but at the same time, challenge them to move beyond simple abstractions and discover what concepts like "personality" were based on--how they derived their meanings from concrete perceptions.

Next I looked at myself as an adult writer. What kinds of things did I strive for? What had I been successfully taught along the way? I surely strove for specificity. I had kept a journal for years, commenting on cycles of personal change. I usually began in a stream-of-consciousness style, listing sensations, noting the details that would explain my perceptions to myself. I wrote often, even if I had nothing to say, in the hope I would discover something to write about. I believe this ritual of writing regularly developed from my training as a dancer and a pianist. As a young piano student, I practiced

daily finger exercises to strengthen manual agility at the keyboard, to prepare myself for a Bach concerto. As a young ballerina, I was forced to do leg-lifts at the bar for thirty minutes each lesson; the remaining fifteen minutes were devoted to dancing. (How we longed for it to be the other way around!) I notice that beginning artists practice drawing the human body again and again, from varying angles, using different materials--charcoals, oils, ink--to capture reality. In drama classes I attended in college, we began acting lessons with short improvisations that allowed us to experiment with emotions *before* we rehearsed major scenes for performance. In all these cases, the learning, the mastering, came more from the practice than from the final presentation.

After drawing these several conclusions about the training of artists, I decided to build into my curriculum a training program for students writers: a program that attempts to engrain craft, to make the use of specific detail automatic, habitual, through regular and rigorous practice. I created a writing program with these coordinating features:

1. Daily practice expanding a general statement into a paragraph.
2. Applying the difference between *telling* and *showing* in the editing process.
3. Practicing specific ways to select and arrange concrete details in developing an idea or structuring an essay.

What follows is a description of that three-part training program as I have used it in my classes for several years and as I have shared it with other teachers in presentations for the Bay Area Writing Project. Both in my own use of the materials and in my sharing of them with other teachers I keep gaining new insights, new ways to refine or expand the practice exercises or the editing techniques. I hear from other teachers that they too keep generating new materials, applying the two basic concepts--daily practice and "showing not telling"--in new ways. I hope that teachers who adopt the procedures described below will write to me about their experiences--their

questions and discoveries.

I have been curious to evaluate the outcomes of my program, for myself and for other teachers who have used it. I have believed from the beginning that I could see in students the kinds of improvement I was aiming for--but could these improvements be measured, and could they be seen by others? Would other readers recognize the same signs of progress I was observing? I include below (pp. 39-71) an attempt to answer these questions through three case studies of students who show different kinds of growth resulting from the daily practice program. Their work provides further clarification of the concepts taught as well as examples of how students respond to the assignments. These cases constitute a qualitative evaluation of the materials: a way of showing what kinds of growth can take place in students being trained.

In addition, with the help of Catharine Keech, research assistant for the Bay Area Writing Project, I undertook to assess the effects of my program using quantitative measures. The resulting research study is included as Part II of this publication. The study raises important questions about how we measure the effectiveness of our efforts as teachers, what things affect student performance on writing tests, and how special training in a particular skill affects the over-all quality of student writing.

DAILY PRACTICE EXPANDING A GENERAL SENTENCE

Since students need the discipline of a regular routine to reinforce use of concrete details in place of, or in support of, their generalities, I assign a daily homework challenge: I give them what I call a *telling sentence*. They must expand the thought in that sentence into an entire paragraph which *shows* rather than *tells*. They take home sentences like:

- The room is vacant.
- The jigsaw puzzle was difficult to assemble.
- Lunch period is too short.

They bring back descriptive paragraphs--short or long, but always detailed, and focused on demonstrating the thought expressed in the assigned *telling* sentence. I challenge students not to use the original statement in the paragraph at all. I ask them to convince me that a room is empty or a puzzle is hard to assemble without once making that claim directly. The challenge is much like charades: they have to get an idea across without giving the whole thing away.

In order to establish the difference between telling and showing, I distribute the following two paragraphs to my students. The first is written by a seventh grader, the second by novelist E.L. Doctorow. Both passages concern a scene at a bus stop.

Telling:

Each morning I ride the bus to school. I wait along with the other people who ride my bus. Sometimes the bus is late and we get angry. Some guys start fights and stuff just to have something to do. I'm always glad when the bus finally comes.

Showing:

A bus arrived. It discharged its passengers, closed its doors with a hiss and disappeared over the crest of a hill. Not one of the people waiting at the bus stop had attempted to board. One woman wore a sweater that was too small, a long skirt, white sweater socks, and house slippers. One man was in his undershirt. Another man wore shoes with the toes cut out, a soiled blue serge jacket and brown pants. There was something wrong with these people. They made faces. A mouth smiled at nothing and unsmiled, smiled and unsmiled. A head shook in vehement denial. Most of them carried brown paper bags rolled tight against their stomachs.

from *The Book of Daniel* (p. 15)

When asked to distinguish the differences between the two paragraphs, most students respond by saying the second paragraph is better because they can *picture* the scene more easily. They think the people in paragraph two are "weird, poor, and lonely," (all *telling* ideas). But this interpretation comes from the

pictures (their word), pictures of people wearing torn clothing, carrying brown paper bags instead of lunch boxes, wearing unhappy expressions on their faces. Student writers can easily discern good description. Getting them to write with close detail is not managed as smoothly.

I remind students that the storybooks they read as very young children are filled with colorful illustrations that *show* the events described on accompanying pages; the writer does not have to describe the lovely red barn with the carved wooden trim, for the picture next to the caption "The barn was beautiful" reveals that idea. However, in more mature literature, drawings disappear from the pages, and the writer assumes the role of illustrator. Language must be his brush and palette. Following such a discussion, I initiate the daily training exercise, explaining to students that they will expand one sentence each night from telling to showing during the entire course of the semester.

Below are sample daily sentences. These sentences are given in no particular order and are not necessarily linked by recurring themes. Sometimes students themselves suggest sentences for successive assignments. By choosing generalizations familiar to students, I increase the likelihood of effective elaboration.

She has a good personality.
The party was fun.
The pizza tasted good.
My parents seemed angry.
The movie was frightening.
The concert was fantastic.
The jocks think they're cool.
I was embarrassed.
My room was a mess.
Foothill students have good school spirit.

The idea of daily writing is, of course, nothing new in itself. I know many teachers who have their students "write for ten minutes" the moment they come to class. My daily writing approach, however, is different in a number of ways. First, many teachers assign "topics" for elaboration like "School" or "Family" or "Sports." Although a topic is open-ended and allows more room for creativity, students often spend more time trying to find something to say than actually writing the composition.

The type of statement I use is similar to the thesis sentence, the controlling sentence of an essay. The generalization supplies the point; the student is given the idea to support. Students are free then to concentrate on experimenting with expressions of that idea. Further, since they are all working on the same idea, they are in a position to compare results--to learn from one another's crafting.

Another departure from other daily-writing "warm-ups" is that this daily writing is done at home. Students must come to class with pieces finished and ready to be evaluated. We don't wait ten minutes while they hastily scribble some sort of solution. I want to give them time--if they will take it--to play with and think about what they are trying to do.

Finally, unlike private journals or some free-writing assignments, these exercises are written to be shared. I use the writings in much the same way a drama instructor uses improvisation as an instructional technique. The daily sentence expansion becomes a framework for practicing and discovering ways of showing ideas. Just as drama students search for ways of expressing "ambition" or "despair" by imagining themselves in real-life situations that would evoke these feelings and discovering ranges of bodily and facial expression, my students arrive at ways of showing "empty rooms" or "difficult puzzles" by experimenting with different kinds of language expression. I instruct them very little, preferring that students find their own solutions. But finally, although the experimenting at home is free--not judged--the practice includes an important element that parallels acting instruction: the daily "public" performance. The students know in advance that some papers will be read to the class for analysis and evaluation. However, they do not know which ones. As theirs might very well be among those I choose (my selections do not fall into a predictable pattern), the students are likely to be prepared.

The "performance" or sharing of improvisational or experimental efforts is an important learning experience for the

selected performers *and* their audience. The first ten minutes of every class session, then, is devoted to oral readings, not writing. I choose between five and seven writing samples which I read aloud to the class, and as a group we evaluate the density of detail. Where did this writer have success with interesting description? Where were her details thin? This is the only time I will not comb the papers for grammar, spelling, and usage errors, for there is no time. Since we respond exclusively to content, students can give full attention to being specific without the pressure of grammatical perfection.

I grade each paper immediately as the discussion of that paper concludes. Besides assigning an A, B, or C grade, I quickly write a general comment made by the group: "great showing; too telling at the end," "great imagination, but write more." This process takes about ten seconds and then I move on to the next reading. I record a check in my gradebook for those papers not selected for reading. If students do not turn in writings they receive no credit. All papers are recorded and handed back before the end of the period, giving the students immediate response and recognition for their work. At the end of the semester I average the number of grades a student has earned in the series of assignments.

There are five major advantages to using such a daily training exercise with its follow-up sharing and discussion:

1. *Students write every day.* I do not assign sentences on the eve of exams, major assignment due dates, or holidays.
2. *I am freed from having to grade an entire set of papers each night, yet I provide a daily evaluation.* If a student is disappointed because a particular writing was not selected, I invite him to share it with me after class. This tends to happen when the student has written a good paragraph and wants me to enter a grade for this particular one, which I am glad to do. It may also happen when a student is unsure of his solution and wants help.
3. *Students selected to perform hear useful comments immediately.* They do not have to wait a week to receive response and criticism. The other students

learn from the process of specifying weaknesses as well as strengths of the work and from hearing suggestions given to the "performing" students by peers and teachers.

4. *Students learn new developmental techniques and linguistic patterns from each other.* Students assimilate new ideas for specificity by regularly hearing other students' writing. In addition, they often internalize the linguistic patterns of other students either consciously or unconsciously. This process is similar to assimilating the speech patterns of a person with a different accent. After close association with this person, we may tune our speech to the inflections of an attractive or entertaining accent. I believe it is often easier for students to learn from other students who write well than from professional writers whose solutions may be out of the students' range.

5. *Students write for a specific audience.* They write with the expectation that classmates may hear their composition the following day. So they usually put more effort into their pieces than if they were intended for their private journals or for teacher-as-evaluator.

A selection of daily writing samples follows. Two students, a remedial freshman and a college-bound sophomore, show growth and change over a two-week time span. Their writings illustrate two important results of the daily practice:

1. Students write more--either because they are finding it easier to generate more writing or because they are working harder on the assignments (or both).
2. Students gain control over a wider range of techniques.

Daily Sentence: *The new students were lonely.*

It was the first day of school and there were two new students, Dick and Dan, who had moved over the summer. They were brothers and this was a new city and school which they had come to, and in this school they would have to make friends because neither of them knew anybody or anyone.

--Freshman Student

This piece of writing is composed entirely of generalities (telling sentences). The writer explains the cause of the loneliness--a new city, new school, necessity for making new friends--

but unless he shows us some foreign streets, strange faces, and unusual customs to support these reasons, he will do little to convince us. Perhaps if he could contrast "playing pool with the gang at Old Mike's Pizza Parlor" to the "eyes avoiding his unfamiliar face in the study hall," the reader might appreciate the realities of "new city, new school, new friends."

Here is the same student's writing two weeks later.

Daily Sentence: *The crossword puzzle was difficult to solve.*

> The sixth row down got me stuck. It was plain to tell that this crossword puzzle was rough. The puzzle as it was, was made for a 12th grade level, and it made me feel as if I was in the 6th grade level. Intellectual words such as "the square root" of 1,091,056 in four digits and others. The next one was a five-letter word for phyladendron, which was "plant" to my surprise. I, as a normal person, had a very hard time trying to figure out what an Australian green citrus fruit was with four spaces. Instinctively I gave up the whole game, as it was too frustrating to cope with.

This selection illustrates an improvement in generating examples. The writer introduces his subject by *telling* that the puzzle was tough, but immediately proves his claim with a series of illustrations--twelfth grade level versus sixth grade ability, intellectual words like square root, exotic plants and fruits that call for specialized knowledge. His writing is more enjoyable to read because of the examples he added. Notice also that his paragraph is longer but never rambles or leaves the point.

Next, the sophomore:

Daily Sentence: *The room was vacant.*

> The next show didn't start for another hour. As I repositioned the spotlight in the upper balcony, the squeaks of the rusty screws seemed to echo throughout the desolate building. I walked down the aluminum stairs that resounded with the sound of rain beating on a tin roof throughout the auditorium. I then opened the curtains to the large, lonely stage which looked dark and forbidding. As I put up the sets and decorated the stage, I guess it would seem to anyone walking in, that the room was very much alive with color and objects. But to

me, even the set and decorated auditorium looked bare.

In the first half of the paragraph, this student carefully constructs detail. Like many students trying to master a skill, he concentrates intensely at first, very mindful of his task. However, there comes a point when, losing his fervor, he reverts to *telling*. With the sentence "I then opened the curtains..." he abandons his use of specifics, relying instead on vague adjectives like "dark and forbidding," or general nouns such as "color and objects."

Within two weeks, this student increased his observational skills considerably. In addition, he was able to sustain his use of vivid details throughout a much longer piece of writing.

Daily Sentence: *The rollercoaster was the scariest ride at the fair.*

As I stood in line, I gazed up at the gigantic steel tracks that looped around three times. The thunderous roar of the rollercoaster sounded like a thunder cloud that has sunk into my ears and suddenly exploded. The wild screams of terror shot through me like a bolt of lightning and made my fingers tingle with fear. Soon I heard the roar of the rollercoaster cease. As the line started to move forward, I heard the clicking of the turnstyle move closer and closer. Finally I got onto the loading-deck and with a shaking hand gave the attendant my ticket.

It seemed like I barely got seated when I felt a jolt which signified the beginning of the ride. While the rollercoaster edged up the large track, I kept pulling my seatbelt tighter and tighter until it felt like I was cutting off all circulation from the waist down. At the crest of the hill, I caught a glimpse of the quiet town which lay before me and gave me a feeling of peace and serenity. Suddenly my eyes felt like they were pushed all the way back into my head, and the town had become a blur. All I could see was a mass of steel curving this way and that as the rollercoaster turned upside down. I was squeezing the safety bar so tight that my fingers seemed to be embedded in the metal. I could see the landing-deck, and I let out a deep breath that had been held inside ever since the first drop. As the roller coaster came to a halt, I

> felt weak and emotionally drained. When I stepped off onto the deck, I teetered a bit to the left, but caught my balance quickly when I saw my friends waiting for me at the exit gate. I tried to look "normal," while trying to convince them in a weak voice that, "Oh, it was nothing."

Even though he makes general claims--"I felt weak and emotionally drained"--he remembers to support his feeling with specific evidence: "When I stepped off onto the deck, I teetered a bit to the left...." Or, as he tries to look "normal," he proves this with dialogue: "Oh, it was nothing." This student puts himself in the experience every step of the narration. Two weeks earlier, he could not sustain such a practice.

The three aspects of the program that encourage this growth are 1) regular practice, 2) regular evaluation (teacher/class response to oral readings), and 3) effective student writing serving as models for learning. Similar growth in the writing of upperclassmen can be found in the case studies section of this report (pp. 39-71) below.

As we've witnessed in the preceeding writing samples, students initially rely simply on increased use of specifics and lengthened paragraphs to improve their writing. As they become accustomed to the practice and experience some security or personal growth in generating examples, I can almost predict when an imaginative student will challenge the conventional means of developing ideas. Perhaps because the writings become less of a chore and more of an enjoyment, one student or another will "try something different," will test the limits of satisfactory elaboration. In much the same way that, after playing Hamlet every night, an actor can suddenly discover an entirely new and fresh way to express despair, so my students find, without my solicitation, original ways to express their ideas. The following interpretation of *The pizza tasted good* demonstrates one student "stretching different muscles."

> I felt a little apprehensive that morning. I wasn't sure if, after so many years of separation, my brother and I could spend an entire day with one another and enjoy it. Pulling on my jeans, I tried to think of a few conversational topics that would

interest us both, just in case conversation came to a standstill. I wondered if he could be thinking of the same thing. "Funny," I thought, "maybe I have no reason to worry: maybe we will have too much to talk about--maybe."

After just a few minutes on the Berkeley campus, I realized that all of my worrying and topic planning was unnecessary. C___ and I had so much to share, so many years to catch up on, and of course, he was certainly expounding helpful, fascinating, or just plain factual information about Berkeley. He even took me to his favorite Mediterranean Cafe. Together we sipped their rich and aromatic coffee blend as he told me about the many hours he had spent there, reading the morning paper or engrossed in some outlandish novel. Of course C___ was excited. He couldn't wait to give me a grand tour of "his" alma mater. He wondered if "his" old pepper tree was still as majestic as ever, and if "his" studying area in the Botanical Gardens was still as beautiful as he remembered. The campus came alive with C___'s nostalgic memories of his old chemistry lab in the Life Sciences Building, or the old Greek Theatre where he enjoyed Shakespeare, Bach, and Sophocles.

By lunch, I knew that C___ and I would never be at a loss for words. More importantly, I knew that there was a strong bond between the two of us--something that even time could not erase--love. Together we sat Indian-style on the grass just below the Campenile. The stringy pizza we had purchased for lunch brought childish grins to our faces, and through the warm silence, we both knew that pizza had never tasted so good.

When I read this particular paper aloud, students attacked the writer for not having mentioned the texture of the crust or the spiciness of the sauce, but being the articulate person she is this senior expertly defended her interpretation by asking the others whether they had ever experienced a luscious meal without the benefit of company. Had some meals simply not "tasted very good" because a low emotional state influenced one's appetite? The offense halted as students sat quiet in contemplation. They looked to me to deliver the verdict, but most students already knew the answer. We can show ideas in ways other than the most literal. Sensory experiences involve more than immediate physical sensations.

This piece of writing became an important lesson, and it came without my instruction. My experience with this training program has shown that the use of effective student composition as models for learning has more impact on the growth of other student writers than the lessons of textbooks. Students emulate the successful writing of other students more than they do that of professionals. From that moment on, in that particular classroom, many students felt compelled to "be different," to probe deeper for solutions. They were excited by this student's discovery because it was their discovery too. The following night, after I had assigned *The living room was a warm, inviting place,* many students focused on *people* making a room warm and inviting rather than fireplaces, sofas, or shag rugs.

To summarize, the daily sentence expansions provide a framework in which students can experiment and discover ways of showing ideas. It is a time for self-exploration in the attempt to attach meaning to experience; it is also a time for increasing fluency and creating a style and voice.

APPLYING "SHOWING NOT TELLING" TO REVISION

The second feature of this training program consists of using this technique of sentence specificity and elaboration to help students revise first drafts of major compositions. Whenever students work on major writing assignments--an essay related to the reading of a novel, a character sketch for a short story, a narration of a personal experience--I have them work with rough drafts in small editing groups. In addition to helping another writer correct spelling and usage errors, a student editor is instructed to search for thinly developed ideas. If a student writer fails to develop adequately an important section of her composition, the editor underlines the sentence or sentences that generalize rather than specify and writes *show* in the margin. The writer must then take the *telling* sentence and expand it for homework. Instead of the usual daily routine in which everyone has the same sentence to develop, here students use sentences

from their *own* materials. As the drama instructor stops the rehearsal of a scene midway and asks the actor to approach the scene from a different perspective through exercises in improvisation, so I halt my writers midstream in their discourse, urging them to consider important elements that need focusing and elaboration. With practice, students become more effective editors, for they train themselves to spot underdeveloped ideas and non-specific language.

When a writer has elaborated her own generalization, she may decide to insert the new version into the composition. The editors in her group work along with me to help her decide whether or not the change is effective. The revisions below illustrate the process.

Seventh Grade Assignment: *Re-creation of a favorite childhood experience.*

This writer describes the fun of playing hide-and-seek with her brother. As she attempts to create excitement and suspense around being found, she writes:

> Leonardo was approaching her. He was getting closer and closer. She thought for sure she was going to be caught.

Editors in her group suggested she *show* "He was getting closer and closer" because this sentence signals an approaching climax.

Her revision:

> She could hear him near the barn, his footsteps crunching the gravel. Next he was on the lawn, and the sounds of the wet grass scraping against his boots made a loud, squeaky noise. Next she could hear him breathing.

This writer is now *re-creating* her experience. By carefully remembering each sensation as her brother drew nearer--footsteps crunching gravel, sounds of boots in wet grass, breathing noises--she leads the reader through the experience. The showing sentences could be inserted smoothly into the original version in place of the telling sentence.

Senior Assignment: *Description of a photograph of Janis Joplin, 60's blues singer.*

One senior began:

Sitting on the sofa she looked exhausted...

Having said so much for appearances, this student went on to suggest *why* Janis was so fatigued. A student editor thought it important for her to *show* the exhaustion, so she underlined that sentence.

The revision:

> Her eyes told of her pain--deep, set-back, reaching inside of herself. Dark caves formed where her cheeks were. Her mouth was a hardened straight line, down at the corners.

As if this writer were the camera lens itself, she zooms in for a close-up, examining in detail the elements that make Janis appear weary.

Sophomore Assignment: *Re-creation of a favorite memory.*

This sophomore girl describes having her first cigarette:

> I slowly sucked the stick and felt a warm sensation fill my chest. A chill ran down my spine as I smiled and exhaled.

The editors challenged her two ways. First, they didn't believe that anyone could "smile and exhale" after a first cigarette. They wondered whether she experienced any discomfort. Second, they wanted more *showing* for "a chill ran down my spine." Her revision:

> I slowly lifted my cigarette until it touched my lips. I sucked the stick and a cloud of warm smoke filled my chest. Suddenly, I felt nauseated and my chest felt like a time bomb ready to explode. I spit the smoke out and coughed. My eyes began to water, but I managed to show a grin.

This version is much more honest; the cliche "a chill ran down my spine" is abandoned for more specific description--"I felt nauseated," "my chest felt like a time bomb," "I spit the smoke out," "my eyes began to water"--and finally the specific verb "managed" makes the grin believable.

Senior Assignment: *Personal essay interpreting the outcome of an important decision.*

In this assignment, students explained the impact of an important decision they had made at some point in their lives. They were instructed to describe in detail their alternatives, then show how they came to make a choice and how the outcome affected them. This senior writer described how she chose between going to a public or private school. Choosing the private school meant leaving home for the first time. Here is the original opening paragraph to her essay:

> I was aboard the London-bound train now. In just eleven hours I would be five hundred miles away from home. Staring at my flowered overnight bag, I frantically reflected upon the decision that I had made. Inside I gasped, "Oh, God, did I make the right decision?" Pull yourself together," I thought, "and just think the whole thing over logically; then you'll realize that your decision was wise." Swallowing hard and trying to keep the tears awa,. I remembered that first day at Brechin High School.

Both her editors and I advised her to "reflect more on the decision," since she didn't give an account of her actual deliberation. "Pull yourself together" does not show us her weakness, what she's afraid she'll give in to. It only *tells* us that she's fighting something inside. Here is this writer's revision:

> I was aboard the London-bound train now. In just eleven hours I would be five hundred miles away from home. "Home," I caught myself repeating the word; how winsome and beautiful it suddenly sounded. Home, where stark white plasterboard walls were softened with woven baskets, dried flowers, and herbs that hung upside down from exposed rafters. I could smell the cardamon from my mother's kitchen, mingled with the pungent aroma of sweet pekoe tea that floated up from the shiny copper teapot. I could see a radiant and crackling fire, dancing to the music of Scott Joplin and the New Orleans Preservation Hall jazz band. I was so overcome by the remembrance of home that I jumped when the conductor opened the door to my compartment to check the ticket which was damp and crumpled in my hand. As he left, the compartment door slammed shut, and the crash of metal against metal echoed in my head. Shivering for a moment, I pulled my woolen sweater across my chest and buttoned it up.

By applying the difference between *telling* and *showing* to editing, students are more likely to be better editors and evaluators of writing. Daily oral teacher evaluation of writing has served as a model. And because changing *telling* to *showing* has become a habit, they are better able to expand their ideas into rich, vivid prose.

USING DAILY WRITINGS TO LEARN SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES

After spending six weeks allowing students to experiment with showing, I begin deliberate instruction in developing ideas. I begin exposing my students to methods of generating details which they may not have discovered or practiced. This is the time for them to study literary devices for revealing ideas, a time to try different stylistic techniques. By altering the procedure in this way, I make two specific changes in the daily sentence practice:

1. I assign *telling* sentences derived from what the class is studying (e.g., persuasive argument, autobiography, short story writing).
2. I require students to expand these sentences in what may be unfamiliar ways. This requirement might be called *directed elaboration* as opposed to the undirected responses of earlier daily writings.

For instance, if we're currently doing a unit on persuasive argument, I structure all the *telling* sentences as opinions: *Lunch period is too short. Teenagers should have their own telephones. P.E. should not be required.* Each day we practice different strategies for developing arguments--dealing with the opposition first, saving the best argument until last--while at the same time examining published essays of persuasion. Students then have the opportunity to apply the new strategy in the assigned daily sentence.

Or, if we're practicing different sentence styles, such as the types of sentences described by Francis Christensen (1967) I require students to use certain modification structures--verb clusters, adjective clusters--in their assigned sentences.

In any case, a final composition assignment--an essay of persuasion, a character sketch--culminates the unit of study. Students write better compositions because the directed elaboration of the daily practices has given them a variety of techniques to draw on. Like the drama instructor advising the student who exaggerates Hamlet's lament, "Instead of delivering Hamlet's soliloquy to the balcony, looking up to the center spotlight, I'd like you to try that speech with your back turned, sitting in the wheelchair," I want my students to experiment with challenging and unfamiliar ways of expressing ideas. Probably the drama teacher does not expect her student to perform Hamlet in a wheelchair in the final presentation; she simply wants the student to experience a new way of delivering despair, an experience he can apply to his final performance. In the same way, I do not expect my students to follow some exact pattern or structure when designing arguments or creating characters, just to stretch their limits and discover options.

When my students write their final compositions, when they sit down to deliver their finest performances, I want them to feel that their hours of training have paid off. I want them to gain a notion of what writers are about. And if they freeze-up midway in the process, if they encounter the blank that all writers face, I hope they will learn to use the "art" itself as a tool of release.

The two sample units of study which follow include my instructions for directed elaboration of the daily sentences. The first is a study in characterization: the second in comparison and contrast.

STUDY IN CHARACTERIZATION
SHOWING PERSONALITY THROUGH PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT

A six-step exercise prepares students to elaborate their next telling sentence in a particular way. This exercise is completed during a class period which culminates in assigning the telling sentence. It instructs students in the use of details to evoke character by allowing them to explore how character is revealed in their own experience of themselves and others.

Step 1. Each student is given a copy of the following chart. (Adapted from Simon, *et al.*, 1972, pp. 331-32.)

Items in my room at home	What I think these items say about me to others	What these items *do* say about me to others.#1.	What these items *do* say about me to others. #2.
1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.

Step 2. Each student privately decides on three items of decoration in his bedroom at home that he considers his favorites. These items might be a poster, plant, photograph, waterbed, record collection--anything that can be seen upon entering the room. If a student does not have

a room of his own, I ask him to consider the section of the room that is his.

In the first column, *Items in my room at home*, each student lists three favorite items. The student should also *describe* each possession so that someone might be able to picture it in its particular setting. For example, instead of merely listing "the plant on my desk," it is better to say, "the baby African violets growing out of an antique lacquered box," or instead of saying "my macrame wall-hanging," one might write "my macrame wall-hanging in the design of a rain-cloud; the colors are iridescent blue, lavender, and silver."

Step 3. In column two, *What I think these items say about me to others*, students suggest what each object might reflect about them. If students have difficulty grasping this idea, I ask them to consider *why* they like that particular item and *why* they chose it as their favorite. Each possession should be interpreted individually.

I also tell them this column is a private column; no one will see their personal interpretations. They are to be as honest as possible.

Example:

Items in my room...	What I think these items say...
1. my trophy collection that sits on top of my bookcase; these trophies range from football to baseball to track; they span eight years of athletic involvement.	1. I'm successful in many different sports. Others have recognized my athletic strength. I'm proud of my achievement and want people--friends--to know about it.

Step 4. When each student has filled in columns one and two, he should fold column one over column two so that column two (the private one) is hidden. Each student then asks a classmate to "evaluate" his furnishings. The responding student provides answers to the question *What* do *these items say about me to others?* In other words, by reading the descriptive list in column one, the evaluating classmate should say what he thinks each item suggests about that person. After responding to each item, he covers his response and returns the chart to its originator. The originator then selects a second person to react to his possessions. *At no time should any evaluating partner look at the interpretations of other students or of the originator.* Each student deserves original evaluations, not repeats of another classmate's impression. If students are worried that others will "peek," I give them paperclips to secure their folded papers.

Step 5. Each student compares his own interpretation to those of his classmates. I encourage each student to write something he learned from doing this activity. "Did most people see you as you

you saw yourself?" I ask them. "Did your evaluators' interpretations differ from your own?"

The sample chart on the following page was completed by sophomore students.

Following this exercise I ask my students, "Why does a writer bother to describe a character's room, house, or environment? Why does she take the trouble to create a setting so vividly?" Students are able to answer, "Perhaps it is because she would like to *show* a particular character's personality, rather than *tell* us about it. Perhaps she would like us to do some interpreting on our own."

After the students have connected setting to characterization, I assign the *telling* sentence *She is strange* for expansion. Although they might reveal her strangeness in many ways--actions, gestures, clothing, dialogue--I ask them to show her eccentricity exclusively through setting. Here is one junior student's solution:

> As I entered the room the warnings of the other girls in the dorm kept running through my head. I had laughed so hard at the stories earl er, but that was before I actually had seen Bessie's room. Directly inside the door was the customary extra-long desk, but she had a small-size, orange bean bag chair sitting on the end of it. Directly above it were the bulletin boards covered with a neatly arranged collection of candy wrappers. The light green curtains were held back from the window with brand new shoelaces.
>
> In front of them was her expensive clock radio, hung from the ceiling in a purple, macrame plant hanger. The large, luminated numbers could be easily read from the bed with blankets spread so tightly that a bobby pin would hit the ceiling if it dared to bounce on them. Above the bed was a four-by-three foot color picture of a burnt hamburger pattie, resting on a catsup drenched bun. On the other side of the room her roomate, Eve, sat watching me and my astonishment with great pleasure. To this day I see the room and smile when I hear others laugh in disbelief about the stories of Bessie's room.

Item in my room at home.	What I think these items say about me to others	1. What these items *do* say about me to others.	2. What these items *do* say about me to others.
1. The items on my shelves, opposite my bed that are on the wall. I have stuffed animals on one, a couple of music boxes, and my two coin banks, and especially my Paddington Bear from England. Also, my radios, camera, jewelry box, and make-up.	1. I want all of these items to show that I love little figures and stuffed animals. I hope that people get the impression that I like keepsakes and that this shelf is the very life of my existence, my personality. There are things on my shelves that are ten years old. It is sort of a replica of my lifestory.	1. That you have been many places and like to gather things. Plus these momentos mean a great deal to you.	1. It shows you own personal objects that have and give you a lot of memories when you look at them.
2. My tape recorder always near my desk or bed, and my tape box.	2. I want people to see that I thoroughly enjoy music and that I might die without my tape recorder. I want them to know that I listen to music at the first chance I get.	2. That you're ready for anything and very fortunate.	2. Something that will give you happiness when you're sad.
3. A trilogy named Lord of the Rings that sits on my bookshelf.	3. I like to read fantasy books.	3. It shows that you like to read.	3. It shows that you are very intellectual and enjoy reading.

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Notice how her entire sketch revolves around specific possessions and decorations. Although her introductory and concluding sentences *tell* or *hint* at Bessie's strangeness with "warnings of the other girls," and "others laughing in disbelief," this writer supports these impressions with a bean bag chair atop a desk, curtains tied with shoelaces and radio resting in a plant hanger.

The students enjoy creating these bizarre environments. In this sort of focused assignment, everyone wants his paper read. In a large class, I have the students form groups so they all can read their creations aloud. After sharing their writings, I hand out the following passage from *The Ballad of the Cal Cafe* by Carson McCullers:

> The large middle room, the parlor, was elaborate. The rosewood sofa, upholstered in green threadbare silk, was before the fireplace. Marble-topped tables, two Singer sewing machines, a big vase of pampas grass--everything was rich and grand. The most important piece of furniture in the parlor was a big, glass-doored cabinet in which was kept a number of treasures and curios. Miss Amelia had added two objects to this collection; one was an acorn from a water oak, the other a little velvet box holding two small, grayish stones. Sometimes when she had nothing to do, Miss Amelia would take out this velvet box and stand by the windows with the stones in the palm of her hand, looking down at them with a mixture of fascination, dubious respect and fear. They were the kidney stones of Miss Amelia herself, and had been taken from her by the doctor in Chehaw some years ago (p. 71).

Notice the organization of this lesson. The students wrestle with the concept first, before they study a model. Their appreciation for style is deepened. Having had to create a similar mood or environment, they will value the expertise of a gifted writer. The daily sentence, then, can be used to practice techniques for developing a characterization and to enhance appreciation of good writing skills.

STUDY IN EXPOSITION
STRUCTURING THROUGH COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

Structuring a comparison is one of the most important lessons students can master. History instructors frequently ask students to contrast two decades or two leaderships; science teachers might have students compare two chemical reactions or two life cycles. When faced with "discussion questions" on essay exams, students can rely on this kind of structure; the comparison/contrast pattern gives them something to *do* with the facts they've studied.

At one point in the year I use the following practices in my English classes to prepare students to write compositions on a major work of literature we are studying. Since I will require these particular essays to be based on themes of comparison between two characters, two settings, two courses of action, I have students practice extensively with the comparison/contrast structure, using the daily sentence to explore and to experiment.

My first assignment in this unit is the telling sentence *Saturday is different from Sunday*. Having students compare subjects with which they are familiar is good preparation for more expanded comparisons. After reading aloud alternative interpretations, we share and discuss successful structures. Here is one by a senior student:

> Weekends. Just two days out of the week, yet many people live just for Saturday and Sunday. Those two days have a distinct flavor to them. They are both days for relaxation, or catching up on what you should have been doing during the week.
>
> Saturday is a totally carefree day. The whole day is yours--even the night. You can party all night long, because there is still Sunday to recover. Saturday is the day for long trips. Sailing on the bay or doing whatever you enjoy. It's the day to take it easy--don't worry about it, you can do it later. Saturday night is a special time--time for parties, seeing a movie, or just laying back and watching "Saturday Night Live." Saturday is a day for doing new things, a day of deep blue skies that

last forever, and nights that sparkle with stars that sparkle crisply.

Sunday really doesn't start until about 6 or 7 a.m. Saturday night holds reign until then but then Sunday manages to break out of the haze. Sunday is catch-up day, the day to do all those things you wanted to get done on this weekend. Sunday is a day for mowing lawns, doing homework, and hauling trash to the dump. It's a garden day, a day to clip back those juniper bushes that have overgrown the sidewalk. Sunday is like a sunset--things don't seem as bright as they did on Saturday, the sky is fading back to gray. It's a day of goodbyes--to people leaving, vacations that are over, memories gone by. By nightfall, Monday is right behind you--you can feel it's presence. It's back inside again--recess is over.

This composition uses a typical form: an introduction showing the similarities of the two days, one paragraph devoted to Saturday, and one to Sunday. However, this student's organizational qualities go deeper; by using parallelism, he brings unity to his composition. If he mentions that Saturday is "deep blue skies lasting forever," he remembers to talk about the "sky fading back to grey" on Sunday; if Saturday is free from responsibility, Sunday is a day for obligations. Most students naturally seem to use this structural pattern--A in one paragraph, B in the other. I explain that this particular pattern is one of a writer's *options*, and we spend a portion of the period examining and discussing such a paper. Again, the lesson evolves from what the students already know how to do.

After such a discussion, I give my students a more challenging technique for consideration--the integrated comparison. Here the writer must move back and forth between her subjects in a single paragraph, knowing precisely how to disclose differences or similarities. Without becoming monotonous in this zigzag fashion, she emphasizes the major points of her comparison. The class examines a paragraph such as the following description of two unusual birds.

There are two species of Sooty Albatrosses (Brown and Antarctic) *both* of which are quite similar in appearance. They *both* have dark plumage, a

> long wedge-shaped tail, and long wings which are very narrow. On the underside of its body, *however*, the Antarctic Sooty Albatross has paler plumage than the Brown Albatross, *and* it flies less gracefully. On their bills *both* species have a groove called a sulcus, which divides the lower segment of the bill; *but* the sulcus of the Brown Albatross is yellow or orange, *whereas* the narrower sulcus of the Antarctic species is blue. For nests, *both* species build up a low cone of earth hollowed out on top (Brittin, 1977, p. 149).

The emphasis of this paragraph is the distinguishing differences between two very similar birds. In contrast to the A-B structure, where a writer might simply list a series of parallel descriptions leaving the reader to extract the similarities and differences, this structure demands that the writer make explicit the points of comparison. In the albatross paragraph, for example, had the writer devoted one paragraph to the Brown Albatross and another to the Antarctic, the reader might have had to re-read both to extract the major differences.

Next, we examine the use of the *transitional expressions* (italicized in the model) that improve the coherence of the paragraph and make the contrasts clear. In the integrated comparison, a writer must use these expressions more frequently than in an A-B structure. So I list on the board for discussion additional expressions that signal similarity or difference:

Transitions for Similarity	Transitions for Contrast
similarly, likewise, equally, in the same fashion, in addition, also, too.	but, however, on the contrary, in contrast, on the other hand, while, whereas.

Finally, we discuss the economy of compiling sets of characteristics into a single paragraph. If a writer has only a few series of details, the single structure works best; a large group of details calls for more paragraphs.

At this point, after close examination of the albatross paragraph, I ask my students to imitate the structure of that paragraph. Their daily sentence becomes *There are two kinds of (fill in own subject).* I want as precise a replica of the sen-

tence patterns used in the albatross paragraph as possible. I want students to get the *feel* of a tightly written comparison, using transitions to disclose similarity and difference. This assignment requires that during pre-writing, each writer discover the distinguishing differences of his comparison in order to be able to imitate the albatross format. If a student falters, he can use the same transitional expressions and create descriptive phrases similar to the model paragraph ("are quite similar in appearance," "on the underside of its..."). Since many students have rarely attempted such an exercise, I introduce the assignment as follows: "If I were to ask you to imitate the structure of 'The cat ran through the grass,' noun for noun, verb for verb, prepositional phrase for prepositional phrase, supplying any subject matter, what sentence might you create?" The responses are usually quick: "The car drove down the street." "The popsicle dripped in my hand." "The crowd cheered in the aisles." Below are two student imitations of the albatross pattern, the first by a junior, the second by a sophomore:

> There are two flavors of Frosted Mini-Wheats (brown-sugar and cinnamon) both of which are quite equal in nutritional supplements. They both are made from 100% whole wheat, have frosting on one side only, and cost the same amount of money. On the frosted side of the wheat biscuit, however, the sugar coated Mini-Wheat has a smoother and lighter texture than that of the cinnamon frosted Wheat biscuit, and it has a sweeter taste. On the uncoated side of the Mini-Wheats both biscuits have hundreds of criss-crossed wheat fibers; but the fibers on the cinnamon coated biscuit are darker, whereas the smaller fibered, brown sugarcoated Mini-Wheat is lighter in color. For breakfast, both flavors of Frosted Mini-Wheats give one a good supply of his daily nutritional needs.
>
> There are two ways of playing tennis (singles and doubles) both of which are played using similar techniques. They are both played on a regular tennis court, scored the same way, and require the same amount of skill. When playing singles,

however, one needs to cover more area of the court due to the fact ther's only one player. In the serving procedures, both the singles and the doubles players must serve the ball into the same area; but the doubles players stand one at the net and one at the baseline while serving, whereas the singles player stands alone at the baseline. In order to be good, both types of tennis require a lot of practice and dedication.

The completion of this exercise requires each writer to read his paper aloud, but because the paragraph is short, this reading takes practically no time. After listening to some thirty imitations, the students have internalized the transitional shifts that create the smooth-running texture of the paragraph. In addition, they begin to grasp an understanding of effective punctuation--the parentheses (Brown and Antarctic) for incorporating a list within a sentence; the semi-colon as a useful way to join closely related sentences which together draw a comparison or make a contrast.

The A-B and the single paragraph structures are comparison alternatives that can be practiced and perfected. Through the use of *telling* sentences which establish context and/or make transitions, both allow writers to incorporate details which make contrasts more vivid to the reader. One senior discovered a less conventional approach in a composition based entirely on *showing:*

Saturday is Different From Sunday

Without the help of an alarm clock, at 8:30 sharp Saturday morning, I wake up brimmed with energy and ready to take on any activity that floats my way. The sun is pouring bars of golden liquid in my window and the bluejays are singing merrily at the top of their musical voices. Anticipating a whole day to do whatever I want, I eagerly throw on my clothes and spring down the stairs. After a light breakfast I grab my old familiar cut-offs and my favorite beach towel, jump in the convertible, and with a delightful screech of the wheels fly off to spend a beautiful day running and laughing in the sun.

> My mother is shaking me and saying, "It's past 11:00. Get up, there is work to do." With a deep groan I open my bloodshot eyes and am immediately blinded by the terrible glare of the sun beaming hot and stuffy directly on me. Very slowly I claw my way out of bed, and in a drained, limp state of semi-consciousness stumble sheepishly down the stairs. My family, faces cheerful and repulsive, is having breakfast. Just the aroma of eggs turns my stomach making me feel queasy. Instead, I trudge to the cabinet, fumble with a bottle of aspirin, and with a glass of warm water sloppily gulp three down. Then, still hung over and depressed, I sit down and stare straight ahead thinking about the agony of mowing the lawn.

The class was impressed by the vividness of this student's composition, achieved almost exclusively through concrete details. He uses other techniques, too, to give the piece a literary rather than expository tone. Although the composition follows the A-B structure, the writer doesn't identify the subject of his composition in an opening paragraph. We don't know that Sunday will be following in contrast to Saturday until we are into the second paragraph. In addition, he changes mood through careful selection of verbs. By altering the connotations suggested by the verbs in the two paragraphs--sun *pouring* bars of golden liquid versus being *blinded* by the glare of the sun; *throwing* on clothes and *springing* down stairs versus *clawing* his way out of bed and *stumbling* down the stairs--he achieves an *implied* contrast. His composition is exemplary in two ways: first, his method of comparing becomes a *third* option for students; second it shows that by paying attention to what *students* do, we can embellish our instruction. Rather than continually relying on textbooks for proper instruction, students can learn special techniques from other successful student writers.

Following examination of these three options (A-B structure, integrated contrast, and use of concrete or *showing* sentences to create implied comparisons), I let students experiment on their own. As their daily sentence I assign another statement of contrast, *My X teacher is different from my Y teacher*, asking

them to structure the comparison in any way they prefer. Some students use one of the studied structures, while others mix all three. Students have the opportunity to test different approaches.

By now we are well into reading and discussing a work of literature, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* or *The Circle*, a play by Somerset Maugham, which the class will analyze in a major assignment. Students are thinking about their essay structures as I suggest contrasting two characters, two settings, two courses of action, whatever can be compared in a specific relationship. They complete one more practice piece, however, before this final assignment. The assignment, a comparison of synonyms, is also a major composition, equal in value to all major project assignments. Besides providing students another chance to rehearse structure, it also requires them to explore the precise definitions of words, attending to the connotations of synonymous terms.

Sample Synonyms for Comparison

rebel revolutionary	love romance	attractive beautiful	rug carpet
curiosity nosiness	pride conceit	jealousy envy	lady chick
wisdom knowledge	success greatness	hate dislike	junk stuff
skinny thin	nuts insane	brainy intelligent	habit custom

One student paper in response to this assignment is included below. Part III of this report, case studies, includes three samples of the literary essays that followed these practices.

LADY--CHICK

A lady and a chick, while both representing the female sex, have many contrasting attributes. In fact, it is not likely that one would find them together. A lady, for instance, might be found in a shaded parlour reading Shakespear or on the veranda sipping a cool drink. A lady is respected

and admired, from afar by men, and in loving friendship by women. Even her physical appearance bespeaks refinement. Her hair may be pulled neatly back from her face, revealing well scrubbed skin and clear bright eyes. She presents a soft, smooth voice at all times, no matter what may ruffle the serenity of the moment. At times, however, a refined laugh may escape from rosy lips showing pearly white teeth.

A chick, represents a different group of the female sex. She has the normal attributes of a woman, but what she does with them is the deciding difference between her and a lady. The chick might be seen on a hot Saturday afternoon slinking down the street, poured into tight jeans that have seen better days. Slogans like "I'll try anything once" or "Too many men and so little time" adorn the front of her shrink-to-fit T-shirt. She, too, may be admired by men, though, in contrast with the lady, not from afar. The chick's appearance, like the lady's is representative of her personal attitudes and values. She may look out on the world through frizzy, unkempt bangs, with eyes ringed with last week's eye-makeup. Whereas the highest compliment to a lady may be a whispered word from the most eligible bachelor in town, a chick receives her compliments from total strangers in roaring cars who wolf-whistle as they screech by.

After a long day of socially acceptable activities, visits, trips to the library, cooking lessons, the lady comes home. About the same time, the chick flops down on her waterbed after a long guitar-playing session in the park. Now they both like to think a bit. If one could hear their thoughts at this moment, one may understand one very important similarity. The lady's secret wish is to be blatently whistled at and the chick thinks how nice it would be to just once be called a lady.

This student's comparison is effective because she uses the comparison structures discussed in class appropriately. She uses *A in one paragraph (discussing the lady) and B in the next paragraph (showing the chick).* In addition she matches characteristic detail for characteristic detail (parallelism). If she mentions the lady "pulling her hair neatly back from her

face, revealing well-scrubbed skin and clear bright eyes," she counters that description in paragraph "B" with the chick "looking out on the world through frizzy unkempt bangs, with eyes ringed with last week's eye-makeup."

The writer also employs the *integrated comparison* (A, however B). In the middle of the second paragraph she shifts into distinguishing or emphasizing the most interesting differences. She begins weaving back and forth between lady and chick, saying "whereas the highest compliment to a lady may be a whispered word from the most eligible bachelor in town, a chick receives her compliments from total strangers in roaring cars who wolf-whistle as they screech by."

Her last paragraph also uses the integrated comparison to bring the essay to an especially effective climax. She continues identifying major differences between the lady and the chick and then jolts the reader with her final ironic revelation.

VARIATIONS ON THE DAILY PRACTICE PARAGRAPH

The English department of an entire school might decide to adopt the daily writing idea, only to find that after the first year, or even the first semester, the assignment begins to loose its appeal for students, and hence its impact on their writing. This is likely to happen whenever students who master a particular response are asked to go on making the same kind of response day after day.

The answer is to use the *principle* of daily practice, but to change the particular skills being practiced, regularly offering new challenges to students. The daily practice paragraph and all its associated activities from classroom discussion to peer-guided revision provides a *method* for teaching and learning, but need not be limited to a single instructional *goal*.

Here are some alternative goals, with ideas for exercise sequences which might re-direct daily practices for a period of time:

1. *Sentence-level practice* rather than writing whole paragraphs allows concentration on several specific kinds of skills. Students practice embedding specifics in a single sentence using lists, appositives, participial phrases, more precise adjectives or nouns, images, etc. Sentence-level daily practice might accompany instruction in skills such as sentence combining, metaphor, diction, denotation and connotation of words, parallel structure.

   Assignment: Teacher provides an empty "telling" sentence as before: *He was confident.*

Challenge: Student must enrich, elaborate, change the sentence, so that the idea of the telling sentence is communicated in a *single* sentence which shows: *When it was his turn to speak, the district attorney stood up, straightened his vest, and sauntered to the front of the courtroom.*

2. *Practice in making powerful generalizations.* It is not necessary to write a whole essay or paragraph in order to practice creating good thesis sentences of the kind which give purpose and direction to exposition or argument. A variety of classroom activities and kinds of instruction could be strengthened by following them with daily homework assignments requiring students to generate one or more appropriate *abstractions* which comment on, interpret, or define a set of concrete facts.

   Assignment: Teacher provides material for shared observation, or simply a list of concrete facts. Or class develops a list of concrete details out of "showing" sentences written the night before.

   Challenge: Student must write an abstract statement or series of abstractions which provide meaning to, or explain the significance of, the collected facts. Because they are based on actual observation of a number of concrete details, these abstractions should be richer than the ordinary telling sentence students have been given in the past.

3. *Practice in focusing: practice in expressing key ideas.* The writing of captions and titles has often been used to help students identify kernel concepts and to recognize how language can be used pointedly to express ideas in a few words.

Assignment: Teacher provides a paragraph, picture, filmstrip, or other stimulus before students leave for the day. Or teacher asks students to *imagine* they will write an essay on what happens when they get home.

Challenge: Instead of writing the essay, students must produce a title, headline, or caption which captures the essence of the experience.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PROGRAM EFFECTS: THREE CASE STUDIES

The following three studies demonstrate three junior students' progress in the Advanced Composition class that followed this training program. Craig, the first student studied, writes below the average for this particular advanced group. Carolyn, the second, represents the average writer. Lisa, the final case study, is a superior writer.

Craig

Craig is a junior impressed with being in Advanced Composition but disenchanted with writing. He has never felt himself a successful writer. He is in this course purely to learn "college writing." He wants to survive at the university by mastering formulas for writing successful papers. If he does not emerge a better writer, he will blame the teacher.

Craig is an inconsistent writer. At times I was surprised by his lack of supportive evidence, by his immature sentence style, and by his lack of editing skills. Compared to the attention other students gave their papers, Craig lacked discipline. On the other hand, there were times Craig revealed a strength in writing, a superior ability to capture the essence of a situation by careful attention to detail. Whenever this kind of skill surfaced, I played upon it, encouraging him to make more use of his observational skills. But no matter what form praise took, Craig rejected any appreciation for his writing. Although he did his assignments, Craig was highly critical of himself and the class, questioning the validity of most assignments. He rarely felt that doing an assignment was

actually related to improving his writing. He objected to the daily paragraphs, objected to the major compositions, argued about grammar study, and continued complaining about the poor quality of his writing. When his best essay was printed for distribution among classmates, he argued privately after class that I had made a grave error in choosing his paper as a model because, he said, it was such poor work.

Three daily writings--written at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester--are representative of Craig's improvement in the use of specifics.

The living room was a warm, inviting place.

> The sun was shining thru the window. It warmed the room to just the right temperature. The floor had soft thick carpeting cushioned your feet. The sofa had soft velvety cushions and swallowed you when you sat in it. The walls were a light blue and had a relaxing effect. The picture on the wall was of a smiling lady who made you feel welcome. The clock ticked a steady beat and gave the room a homey feeling.

Although Craig manages to include several concrete examples--soft, thick carpets; soft, velvety cushions swallowing you; picture of a smiling lady on the wall--he fails to elaborate other important influences which he mentions briefly--sunlight warming the room to "just the right temperature;" light blue walls having a "relaxing effect;" a ticking clock giving the room a "homey feeling." These descriptions are abstract and require much more penetrative thinking to convey the image exactly. This does not mean that every abstraction needs to be elaborated; it shows rather that Craig, at this point, is limited to describing concrete reality. He leaves the more difficult illustrations of feelings and sensations--relaxing effect, homey feeling, etc.--for the "safer" descriptions of paintings and couches and carpets.

A few weeks later, Craig, like most students, writes longer paragraphs. In the attempt to show more, Craig is able to sustain a longer discourse:

After the meal, the dinner table did not look the same.

> I looked at the table and my mouth started to water. Everything on the table looked just right. There was a rare cooked roast, the side dishes had their appetizing appeal while everything else on the table was clean and neat. The pure white tablecloth, under the gleaming silverware with plates and dishes that shined like mirrors. After I had eaten all that I could fit in my stomach I leaned back and glanced at the table. Everything on it had been thrown, spilled, or dropped on the table. Someone had spilled his milk and part of the tableclothe was wet and soggy. Some red juice had spilled over the edge of the meat platter and there was a red ring on the tableclothe. All that was left of the meat was a well picked bone. The pan that had held the vegetables had a little butter juice in the bottom as evidence they had been there. All the silverware was strewn all over the table.

Craig is increasing his ability to elaborate abstract ideas. In his second sentence, Craig tells that everything on the table "looked just right." However, he moves on to generate a specific picture--rare cooked roast, side dishes. He tells us that everything on the table looked "clean and neat," supporting this impression with pure white tablecloth, gleaming silverware, plates that shine like mirrors. Even though he leaves the reader dangling with side dishes having an appetizing appeal (abstract), he is obviously concentrating on improving some of his abstract ideas--a definite growth pattern. We can witness this growth again when he states that after the meal everything had been thrown, spilled, or dropped on the table and supports this generality with spilled milk which makes the table cloth wet and soggy, red juice spilling over the edge of the meat platter, leaving a red ring, the remains of the meat, a well-picked bone, etc. Craig is beginning to differentiate generality from specific by remembering to support several of his abstractions.

In a later writing, Craig successfully manages to detail a rather difficult idea, a state of mind. With the telling sentence *Some students are not afraid to cheat,* Craig writes the following:

> Mike walked into his first period class. The talk his father had given him on cheating was still going through his mind. His fourth period math teacher had sent a note to his parents explaining how she had caught him cheating. When his parents got it they flew into hysteria. They started to lecture him on how it was when they went to school. They told him how the kids then used the honor system and how it was unheard of to cheat. They told him that it only hurt him to cheat. His mind popped back into the present. His French teacher was passing out a surprise quiz. He had not studied the night before because he had been so mad at his parents. The teacher finished passing out the quizzes and went to her desk in the far corner away from Mike. He had pass this quiz to pass the class so his eyes started to wander towards the persons paper beside him. The lecture he had just recieved had allready vanished from his mind.

In this particular selection Craig must prove that the individual lacks fear. Craig's proof is the entire paragraph, built around the sophisticated use of flashback. Craig puts the reader inside the thinking of the cheater, using a series of events that build on each other to show his lack of apprehension. Each flashback moves closer to the present; each memory of cheating (and the resulting punishment--fourth period math teacher sending a note home, the heavy parent-lecturing which he remembers to show) will end up supporting the condition that Mike cares little about the consequences of cheating. As he moves into the present--the French teacher passing out a surprise quiz--and as we see Mike's eyes easily wandering toward his neighbor's paper, we understand the irony of his flashback--it has had no effect on him. That one small gesture of "eyes wandering" shows much about Mike in the face of his past history--indeed, proves he is not afraid to cheat.

The effects of the daily practice can be seen in the following excerpts from a major essay assignment in which close work with revision was required. Peer-group editors were searching for thinly developed ideas, and students were asked to "show" these ideas for homework (part II of the training program).

This essay concerns the outcome of a personal decision. Students were asked to reflect on the reasons they chose a particular course of action in the face of an important choice. Craig wrote about choosing to go motorcycle riding when his mother had forbidden it. Here are his opening paragraph and the paragraph which holds the climax of his story. Accompanying each is the revision of that paragraph written after classmates in editing groups had suggested he elaborate.

Opening Paragraph:

> Many times I have gone against what my mother has told me, but one time really sticks out in my mind. My mom has always forbidden me to have anything to do with motorcycles. It was probably because she was involved in a really bad accident when she hit one, but I still couldn't understand why she wouldn't let me ride one at least once. Finally, I decided to go with my friend the next time he went riding.

In this final sentence Craig has leaped into making the decision without showing the reader *how* he came to decide. For a moment he stands puzzled--"I still couldn't understand why she wouldn't let me ride at least once"--and then jumps ahead into deciding--"Finally, I decided to go...."

Revision:

> Many times I have gone against what my mom has told me, but one time really sticks out. My mom has always forbidden me to have anything to do with motorcycles. It is probably because she was involved in a really bad accident about four years ago when she hit a bike and injured the rider. However, I still couldn't understand why she wouldn't let me ride one at least once. Her accident didn't affect me, and all of my friends were riding or owned bikes. I had one good friend with a bike who offered to take me with him. For a couple of weeks I thought about what I should do. I thought of both sides, and finally rationalized that to go riding would be better. After all, I was going to be riding where there were no cars.

In this revision Craig explains his rationalizations more clearly--his mother's accident not affecting him, all his friends owning bikes, his riding safely on streets without

traffic. Now we are *shown* how he came to decide.

Here is the climax of his story:

> All of a sudden, I wrecked and was lying on the road. I had been accelerating down a straight stretch and was coming up on a turn. There was a little bit of gravel on the road, and when I put the front brake on from habit and started to take the turn, the front wheel locked. The next thing I knew, both the bike and I were on the ground. I quickly got up and picked the bike up and tried to start it. I didn't hurt very much in one particular spot, but I was very shaken up.

Students in Craig's editing group suggested he show his state of being "very shaken up" (telling stentence underlined). After all, having an accident was what he most wanted to avoid; because he thought it really couldn't happen to him, he chose to disobey his mother's command.

Revision:

> All of a sudden, I wrecked and was lying on the road. I had been accelerating down a straight stretch and was coming up on a turn. There was a little bit of gravel on the road, and when I put the front brake on from habit and started to take the turn, the front wheel locked. The next thing I knew, both the bike and I were on the ground. I quickly got up and picked up the bike and tried to start it. The first couple of times that I kicked it over nothing happened; but finally, after playing with the choke a little bit, I got it started. I didn't hurt very much in any one particular spot, but I was very shaken up. For one thing, there were a couple of soccer teams practicing on the field next to the road. I could feel the embarrassment sweep over me like a big black cloud. My hands were scraped up a little bit and had a slight sting to them. I was also shaking because I thought I might have ruined the bike in some way.

Now we know *specifically* what has shaken Craig--the resulting embarrassment from the soccer team witnessing his clumsiness, the pain from the scraped up hands, the fear he may have ruined the bike.

Craig, at this point in the course, is better equipped to make these revisions, to apply the difference between telling

and showing to his own writing, because of the daily practice. In several additional essays before the end of the semester, Craig was required to go through the same revision process.

Here is Craig's best essay, written at the end of the semester. Craig contrasted two characters in Somerset Maugham's play *The Circle*.

Envy and Strife

In Act II of the play "The Circle", Lord Porteous makes several statements that show his feelings about Clive. He says things like, "Let me tell you that I don't like your manner", and "I never liked you, I don't like you now, and I never shall like you." Of course there are many possible reasons why Porteous disliked Clive, but three really stand out. Lord Porteous was envious of Clive because Clive understood Lady Kitty, he led a more successful life, and he enjoyed life more then Lord Porteous.

Clive had the ability to understand what Lady Kitty wanted while Porteous did not. Porteous would yell and become angry with Kitty, while Clive showed grace and manners when he was around her. For instance, when Kitty lost her lipstick, Clive give it to her but he also made a witty statement about it. Porteous simply could not keep his cool when he was around Kitty. When playing patience, he could not stand to have Kitty help him, and he became so angry when she did that they had a terrible argument. They ended up not talking to one another for half the night. Clive controlled his temper though; he calmly accepted her when she was around. For example, when Kitty asked him if he wanted her to come back to him, Clive calmly told her that he didn't care for her anymore. Most men would have become at least a little emotional.

Besides the fact that Clive got along with Kitty better, he also had a more successful life than Porteous. By running away with Kitty, Porteous sacrificed his almost certain position of prime minister. Because of the divorce scandal with his ex-wife, Porteous went from a high political position to nothing in a few short years. Comparatively, Clive did lose a little over the scandal, but not nearly as much as Porteous. Clive just disappeared from the public eye and still had a fairly successful life. He also did not have as much to lose as Porteous. Clive lived very comfortably and did a lot of traveling, visiting the higher society of Europe. Porteous, on the other hand, just went to live in an old secluded castle which he owned; and although he

had plenty of money, he was thrust down to the lowest social class. Also, because of Lady Kitty, Porteous did not have many real friends.

Besides his relationship with Kitty and his social status, Porteous also dislike Clive because Clive had more enjoyment in life. While Porteous was constantly fighting with Kitty, Clive was having affairs with many different young women. Although Clive was very upset when Kitty first left him, he soon decided he was not going to let it ruin his life. He would start an affair with a young woman and break it off when the lady reached the age of 25. Meanwhile, Porteous had to suffer with the company of Lady Kitty for 30 years. Even though Porteous loved her, they were always bickering and having little arguments which made his life miserable. Porteous was not as happy or satisfied as Clive.

Because of his envy, Lord Porteous did things that we, as normal people, might do. For example, when he refused to speak to Lady Kitty it was because he was jealous of her relationship with Clive. Many times when a guy is jealous of someone his girl friend knows, he expresses his resentment by refusing to speak to her. He will usually say it is for some other reason, but if he looked deeply enough into himself, he would find that it was because of jealousy or envy.

Craig elaborates the jealousy of one character over another with careful use of example. Not only is his thesis insightful and rather sophisticated, his rich use of dramatic evidence shows Craig's growth in attention to detail--especially to abstract ideas, in this case "jealousy and envy." Although there are weak, underdeveloped segments--like choosing to paraphrase the action of the play instead of using direct quotations ("When Kitty lost her lipstick, Clive made a witty statement" or "Porteous and Lady Kitty were always bickering and having arguments")--he manages to find a variety of examples that when totaled, support the notion that one character is indeed jealous of the other.

Finally, here are the pretest and posttest essays Craig wrote for the research experiment, laid side by side, so that we might examine the kind of writing skills Craig had gained:

Pretest Essay

Score 9

Describe something from which you learned a lesson.

I was wet fly fishing. I had filled my clear plastic bobber with water, tied a fly to the leader and proceeded to cast the rig out and reel it back in. My friend was with me but he was just watching. He had never really learned to fish but he was going to help me land the fish since I didn't have a net. Twenty minutes had passed and we were both getting tired of fishing. It was midafternoon, about 3:00 o'clock so the fish probably weren't feeding anyway. Then all of a sudden I had a strong strike. I had the fish hooked and started to reel him in. He fought very hard and would swim towards me to make me think I had lost him since my line went slack. Then I would reel in some line and find out I still had him. Finally I had him very close to shore, his back stuck out of the water because I had him so close to shore. I told my friend to grab him in the middle of his body so that he wouldn't get away. My friend started to grab the line with one hand because since he never went fishing he didn't know that was wrong. The next thing I knew the hook had come out of the fishes mouth and had come up to where my friend had a hold of the line. He almost got the hook in his hand but he let go of the grip he had on the fish so he could get the hook out of his hand. We had lost the fish and it turned out to be the only bite I had that day. I have learned from that experience to never trust someone to do something right that they have never done before.

Craig begins by incorporating close description (filling the plastic bobber with water, tying the fly to the leader, casting out the rig). When he gets his "catch" he again shows the feeling--the fish fighting very hard by swimming towards him to deceive him, making his line go slack; the fish losing his battle when Craig sees his back sticking out of the water. However, when we get to the most crucial part of his story, the learning of the lesson, we become somewhat lost because he does not clearly show us why or how his friend did not know what to do with the catch. After he tells his friend to grab the fish in the middle of his body, the friend "grabs the line with one

hand because since he never went fishing he didn't know that was wrong." Craig doesn't tell us what was wrong. The next thing we know his friend accidentally loses the fish because the hook almost gets caught in his hand, and Craig learns he should have released the fish himself.

Although Craig does use some close description to show the novice fisherman's error, he is not clear in showing us the correct way to get the fish so that we might understand his friend's blunder. In addition, for the learning of the lesson to have impact, we need to feel the importance and thrill of cathing *that* fish--a feeling Craig fails to convey. Rather than a slow building of excitement or suspense around making the catch, Craig rushes through to the climatic moment--"twenty minutes had passed and we were both getting tired of fishing." It is hard to believe this catch really matters.

In Craig's posttest essay his growing skill is evident:

Posttest Essay

Score 11

Describe something you enjoyed doing as a child.

A Detective, racing againsn't time, atempts to solve the puzzle of the crime before it is too late. He races around town in his red sports car always one step behind the criminal. Then, out of the blue he solves it, right before your eyes. You can never understand how he seems to put the pieces together the way he does but they always seem to fit.

Now I'm on space colony three, trying to prevent a explosion from destroying everybody while the enemy attacks from all sides of the ship. The enemy fighters whiz by at terrific speeds, our anti-matter guns trying to hit them with their deadly energy bolts. Finally the enemy ceases the attack and we complete our mission of exploring a new planet.

The cool sea breeze blows through my hair as it whips away the fishy smell of the ship. Suddenly the lookout shouts and signals that a French ship is ahead, full of treasure and gold. Our pirate ship prepares to broadside it as we prepare for a fight. We come along

side the ship, our cannons blazing, a fire breaks out on their ship as we hurry to get the treasure before it sinks with the ship. After the fight, everyone celebrates the treasure that we have just captured and we prepare ourselves for another raid.

All of these scenes can be found in my imagination as I would read books on subjects like these. The excitement of a pirate ship to the thrill of solving a crime. The number of books is endless. I enjoyed laying down with a good adventure book as my usual dull life had the excitement of a book

In this final piece of writing, we see Craig's attention to sensory detail pervade the entire composition. In addition, he begins with the course of his memory, putting the reader immediately within this pastime. This technique of plunging the reader right into the action is far more sophisticated than introducing the memory with a telling sentence such as "I was wet fly fishing" in the pretest essay. Craig learned this technique in two different ways during the semester: 1) hearing other student writers use the technique during the daily oral readings, and 2) writing to my lesson on "moving right into the action" as a narrative technique.

Going further, Craig now gives his attention to paragraphing, showing a growth in singling out and developing the major ideas of his essay. In his pretest essay he combined numerous ideas--setting, situation, climax, resolution--in a single paragraph, devoting little time to the elaboration of any one description. Craig now paragraphs the detective, then the astronaut, then the pirate, demonstrating the effects of daily paragraph practice.

Carolyn

Carolyn is a junior who has average writing ability and sincerely wants to improve. She does all homework assignments, does them on time, studies diligently for tests, and usually puts much time into composing essays. She's the sort of student who always achieves A's in English for being conscientious, but she really has no special flair for an especially interesting writing style.

Here are three daily writings representative of Carolyn's growth in use of specifics. Like Craig's, these are illustrative of work done at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester.

Those girls are snobs.

> I can't believe those girls! They strut around school like they own the world. They'll never condescend to speak to anybody who isn't a member of their select group. They might honor you with a quick hello, but never carry on a conversation with you. If by great chance they speak to you it's usually to let you know how inferior you are. They prefer to live in their own narrow world, too bad they don't realize how much they are missing.

Carolyn's paragraph is almost entirely built of abstractions. "They strut around like they own the world" is a cliche. They speak to you only "to let you know how inferior you are" is telling. We need some direct dialogue here, some snatch of conversation. "They prefer to live in their own narrow world" needs examples like "every girl in the group wears a dress on Mondays, jeans on Tuesdays, as feathered-back Farrah Fawcett hairdos," etc.

Several weeks later Carolyn shows *She seemed frightened:*

> The chatter of gosipy girls hit me as I opened the door. There were about twenty young noisy girls scattered about the room. They all seemed to be enjoying themselves: talking with friends, eating popcorn, playing cards, or drinking rootbeer, all except one girl. She sat quietly in the corner of the room studying the rest of the group. When one of the girls came up to her from the side she jumped like a frightened bunny. She quickly turned to see who had tapped her on the shoulder. The girl asked if she wanted to play cards and without hesitation she said no and turned sharply around. She studied everything in the room. She seemed to be picking apart everything and everybody with her dull eyes. She kept a tight hold of her sweater trying to keep everybody in her sight. I went up and offered her some popcorn, she replied with a short and quiet "No, thank you" and went on with her scrutinizing of the room.

This piece of writing shows marked improvement. Carolyn remembers to support general claims with "pictures." "They all seemed to be enjoying themselves (abstraction), talking with friends, eating popcorn, playing cards, drinking rootbeer (specifics)." Amidst all this pleasantry sits the lone girl who seems frightened. Carolyn shows this through "jumping like a frightened bunny" when being approached from the side, turning quickly to see who has tapped her on the shoulder. She also "kept a tight hold of her sweater, trying to keep everyone in sight." Carolyn even uses dialogue to convey the girl's shyness and fear--saying a quiet "No, thank you" to popcorn.

Here is a daily writing from late in the semester:

> Car advertisements are unrealistic because advertisers promise misleading gas mileage, they imply that the cars come fully equipped, and they get better gas mileage on the highway than they do in stop and go traffic, but car advertisers only give the very best mileage. They don't give you the mileage for when you have the air conditioner or heater on, or when you drive in the mountains, or when you are stuck in five o'clock traffic. They claim that their cars have the best mileage, but they don't tell you if other cars have the same. They forget to point out the costs of the extras: the radio, air conditioner, the power brakes, the clock, and the power steering.

> They don't tell you a car is like a pizza. The more toppings you want, the more you have to pay. The more comforts you want, the more you have to pay.
>
> The car advertisers appeal to your emotions instead of your common sense and knowledge. They have a woman in a sexy dress tell you how good a car is instead of a mechanic who knows something about cars. Advertisements are often misleading by having rich, pretty or handsome people do ads implying that you will become rich and beautiful if you buy their car.

Carolyn is not only writing longer compositions, she is also increasing her attention to detail and example. Each abstraction of her thesis--misleading gas mileage, implying cars are fully equipped, giving silly reasons for purchasing--are all supported with specific examples--not mentioning mileage change due to air-conditioner or heater use or driving through the mountains; not mentioning extras, specifically radio, power brakes, clock (she even makes an artful analogy, comparing the extras to extras on a pizza); having a sexy woman sell the car in place of a knowledgeable mechanic.

Carolyn's work with revision in her editing group also reveals her improvement in specificity. Here are two excerpts and their revisions from her "essay of decision." She had to decide whether to give up gymnastics, a favorite extracurricular activity, to meet the demands of college preparatory classes and marching band. The first is the opening paragraph of her essay, the second is the actual deciding.

Opening Paragraph:

> A sport which I have always enjoyed doing is gymnastics. Even though I'm not Olga Korbut or Nadia Comaneci I can do a few stunts and enjoy doing what I can. I have been participating in gymnastics for about six years intermittently. In my freshman and sophomore year I was a member of the Foothill Gymnastics Team. We lost every meet. But that didn't matter, we still had fun. Each year I would say, "Well, I'll just have to do better next year." This year was going to be my year.

In essence, Carolyn is "telling us" that she's been involved in gymnastics for a long time and has thought it much fun. However, where is the real enjoyment, the real skill? If her essay will concern giving up this beloved sport, we need to believe her attachment to it. Her peers suggested that to make us believe her dedicated involvement she *show* what stunts she could do.

Revision:

> Gymnastics has been an important part of my life since I was ten years old, and I've loved every minute of it. The exercise has kept my body limber, while the hard work and frustration of learning a new move have always been outweighed by the satisfaction of achievement. Even though I'm not Olga Korbut or Nadia Comaneci I'm content with a mastery of such basic moves as cartwheels, roundoffs, turns, rolls on the beam, or a pullover on the bars. The challenge of not being able to do more difficult moves gives me an insentive to work harder.

In this passage we see the benefits of having been involved in gymnastics--keeping her body limber, allowing her new goals to set and conquer; we see the basic exercises she has mastered: carwheels, roundoffs, turns, rolls on the beam and pullovers on the bars. We have moved from fun, enjoyment, and achievement in the original version to specific causes of those feelings.

Next Carolyn debates whether to continue in the sport:

> Considering how much time I would have to spend with band and how much harder my classes were going to be, I realized that if I was on the team this year my schedule would be just as bad, probably worse, than last year. I had to decide whether to continue with a very hectic schedule this year or not to go out for the gymnastics team.
>
> I didn't go out for the team. Even without being on the gymnastics team I still don't have time to do all that needs to be done. I miss doing gymnastics and losing all the meets. When I told the coach I was not trying out for the team she said, "I was hoping you would get over the high bar this year." Getting over the high bar was going to be my personal goal for the year.

Now that goal won't be met. I've finally accepted the fact that I can't do everything.

Carolyn fails to do two things: 1) show the rigor and strain of her upcoming year ("how much harder my classes were going to be") and 2) show how she came to decide not to go out for the team ("I didn't go out for the team.")

Here is Carolyn's revision:

> I tried to imagine what this year would be like. I knew my classes would be more difficult. I'd be taking U.S. history, Advanced Comp., Advanced Math, Marching Band, Physics, and French 3. I knew I would have to spend a lot of time on my homework to maintain my 4.0 g.p.a. Being on the gymnastics team meant practice everyday for two hours and meets twice a week. Band practices would be scheduled almost every afternoon and sometimes in the evenings. Performances would take up Friday nights and all of Saturday. The pieces were not fitting together very well. My schedule was going to be even busier than last year. My big problem was to decide whether to try this ridiculous schedule or give up the gymnastics team.
>
> My mom and boyfriend helped influence my decision. My mom knew better than I how much time I would have to devote to the band and she was opposed to my joining the gymnastics team. I value her opinion highly and knew that she was right. My boyfriend is always upset with me for being too busy even though he's in the band too. I knew he would really be furious if I added gymnastics to my already hectic schedule.
>
> Gymnastics has been eliminated for this year, but it hasn't helped much. I still don't get enough sleep, practice the piano enough, study enough, or spend enough time with my boyfriend or family. I miss being a member of the gymnastics team, I even miss losing all the meets. The coach's reply when I told her I wasn't going out for the team was "Oh! I'm going to miss your floor routine. I was hoping you would get over the high bar this year." Getting over the high bar was going to be my personal goal for the year. Now that goal won't be met. I've finally learned that I can't do everything, at least not this year.

Clearly, Carolyn has composed a much richer piece of writing.

We are shown exactly what will constitute her academic course-work. We are shown the amount of time each activity, gymnastics, school work, and band, will take up. The elaboration of the time elements in conjunction with her mother and boyfriend's feelings show us how she came to make her final decision.

Carolyn's essay of comparison for *The Circle* reveals further progress:

TIME CHANGES ALL

Best of friends often are as alike as two peas in a pod. They think, do, and say the same things. If one friend thinks the boy next door is cute, then the other friend also thinks he is cute. One often sees best friends looking at each other at the same time when somebody says something they think is strange. But as the years go on, even the best of friends drift apart. They drift like ice blocks in the seas, slowly forming their own shape. So it is in W. Somerset Maugham's play The Circle. Over the years Lord Porteous and Clive Champion Cheney, who were once best friends, changed greatly and are now different in appearance, disposition, and social status.

Thirty years before the setting of the play, Lord Porteous was one of the best dressed men of London. Clive admired Lord Porteous and describes Porteous to Elizabeth, Clive's daughter-in-law, as very nice looking. He points out that Porteous had the yellow hair and blue eyes that everyone envied and a fine figure to top that. But now thirty years later, Clive is the one with the fine figure. As the narration describes Clive, he is a tall man, in his sixties and bears his years with grace. He still has a fine head of gray hair. He is very well dressed and one can tell he makes the most of himself. Lord Porteous, on the other hand, can be described as elderly. Even Clive tells him that he is aging. He has no hair, has false teeth, and wears eccentric clothes. He complains about his false teeth while Clive tells how healthy his are. It is no wonder that Porteous refuses to go and says he hates exercise when Kitty, his mistress, asks him to go for a stroll. His once fine figure is gone.

Clive is a man with an easy-going personality. While Porteous is very gruff and snappy, Clive doesn't become upset even when he finds out

that his ex-wife and her lover are going to be in the same house as he. But Porteous becomes outraged when people talk while he is playing bridge. Clive himself says that he has a naturally cheerful disposition and Porteous implies that his disposition has been soured at no fault of his. Porteous scolds Kitty and tells her that she ruined his career, as Clive speaks to her softly and tries to comfort her.

Clive and Porteous were both once very active in politics but now neither are. They both are still very rich, but they lead very different lives. Clive travels all around Europe spending time in Paris whenever he wants. He has a new mistress, always a younger woman, whenever he fancies one. Porteous, on the other hand, lives in France, where there are no sanitary conveniences, and among loose ladies and vicious men. Lord Porteous isn't accepted into high society because he lives with a woman to whom he is not married. People are snobs to Lord Porteous and no longer look upon him as a well known figure.

It is funny to see what time does to people. The closest of friends can become enemies and thoughts once shared can now be argued. So it was between Clive and Porteous. Time aged them both in its own and different way. Clive is still young at heart. He tells Kitty that he still has his wild oats to sow. While Porteous became a stereotyped figure of an old man--he is bald, has false teeth, and has become very grumpy with time. No one can really predict what time will do. One is often surprised at the outcome of how time changes people.

Besides Carolyn's rich use of example to support her thesis--Porteous and Clive, who were once best friends, greatly changed in appearance, disposition and social status--she creates an analogy to show how time changes people: "They drift like ice blocks in the seas, slowly forming their own shape." We are reminded of this comparison once again at the finish of her essay. "No one can really predict what time will do. One is often surprised at the outcome of how time changes people."

With this use of analogy Carolyn shows she can use several developmental techniques at once to show contrast. The intermittent use of examples in the body of her essay supports her creative comparison.

Carolyn's growth is documented, finally, in her pretest and posttest essays:

Pretest Essay

Score 8

Describe something you enjoyed doing as a child.

> When I was younger my sister, Lynda, Lisa, Lori, and I would play house by the hour. Lynda, Lisa, and Lori lived across the street from us so we were always together. It may seem strange, but we had a name for what we play. When we played house; we played "Your Highness." The named evolved from another game we played which became house. We would set up elaberate houses, or so we thought, in our garages. The houses even had separate rooms. We spent half our time setting-up and cleaning up.
>
> "Your Highness" involves one family. The members of the family were: a dad, which was I, Lynda was always the mom, an older and younger daughter which were Lisa and Peggy, my sister, respectively, and last but not least Lori played the teenage son. Now what we know about how parents treat their kids; we thought everything. Of course the kids would argue, and the parents sent them to their rooms, and that would settle everything. Then they were the outside family arguments like "Why does Lynda also get to be the mom?" complained Lisa. "Because I'm older." replies Lynda. Oh, well you can't please everybody. But a couple little argument never stopped us from playing.
>
> Eventually we stop playing "Your Highness." I guess we just thought we were too old for such silly games. Now when ever the five of us get together we laugh about our silly but fun games.

Although Carolyn outlines the principles of the game "Your Highness"--someone was the dad, the mom, the younger and older daughters, the teenage son--she doesn't reconstruct actual episodes. She tells us that the kids "would argue" and be "sent to their rooms" to settle disputes--but we do not see the actual

arguments--the colorful vignettes that show kids imitating parents and their children in conflict.

Carolyn's posttest essay shows maturity in description:

Posttest Essay

Score 10

Describe something from which you learned a lesson.

During my freshmen year in high school I started going with my first boyfriend. We were very close. We would see each other at school, go out, talk for hours on the phone and tell each other our inter-most secrets. After seven months my feelings started to change. My boyfriend didn't seem as special anymore. I wanted to be around other people more. It seemed like the bar that held us together had turned to string.

My problem was that the feeling wasn't mutal. He didn't feel like anything was different between us. I thought for a long time about how I was going to tell him. I'd see him at school and want to tell him, but I couldn't. I tried calling him but every time I picked up the phone I got a lump in my throat and my hands would shake, so I'd hang up feeling like a rat.

Finally I got up my courage, all of it from deep inside myself, and told him how I felt. I felt like a wicked person. It was like telling an anxious child that there would be no Christmas tree or presents this year. That was the hardest thing that I had ever done. It was even worse than telling my mom I broke her crystal laddel.

Because his feelings weren't the same as mine he pleeded for me to take him back. When he looked at me he had the expression of a little lost puppy. On a bus trip down to L.A. he played a tape with all "our" songs on it. He begged me again to accept him back into my heart but I couldn't. Why couldn't he respect my feelings?

I don't think I have ever gone through something as upsetting as our after brake-up. I never wish that kind of pain on anyone, not even my worst enemy. Even though it hurt very much, I learned something very valuable. No matter what one's feelings are, one should always respect another's feelings. If one doesn't he can really hurt the one he cares for.

Carolyn enjoys using comparison to show her emotions. She does

not give the actual change in feeling through concrete examples, but summarizes her feelings in terms of analogy, a technique Carolyn obviously came to appreciate and cultivate during the course of the semester. Carolyn chooses an appropriate technique, also, for conveying difficult emotions (abstractions) which can often be best described through comparison. Like Craig, she learned the impact this technique can have through 1) hearing other compositions daily, and 2) learning the technique as an optional strategy (part III of the training program). Carolyn shows her once-close relationship as a "bar, turning to string." When she tried to confront her boyfriend about her feelings, we see her failure to be strong--feeling lumps in the throat, hands shaking, hanging up the phone, the analogy of feeling like a rat.

When she finally mustered up courage, she "felt wicked, like telling an anxious child there would be no Christmas tree or presents" (another analogy). It was even worse than telling her mother about the broken crystal ladle (symbolizing her boyfriend's fragile state of mind).

The boyfriend's reaction is also put in terms of comparison--"expression of a little lost puppy." Finally, his resulting reaction of playing their songs to her on tape in order to win her back becomes the "symbolic gesture" (the showing) of how blind he was to her pain in having to be honest. Although her conclusion struggles in its explanation of the lesson learned, her use of analogy throughout as a means of description shows a maturity in writing style.

Lisa

Lisa entered Advanced Composition already appreciating the importance of specificity in writing. She practiced consistently the use of specific examples in narrative as well as expository compositions. Her daily paragraphs, when read aloud, drew admiring responses from the class, and her major essays usually surfaced as models of excellence. Certainly Lisa's writing contained weaknesses, in organization and editing, for example; but the natural ease with which she incorporated specifics contrasted sharply with the struggles of others. I was curious, then, about what impact the training program might have on an already gifted writer.

Here are three daily writings taken over the course of the semester.

The autumn weather reminded me of other autumns.

> I am always caught by suprise when the first autumn weather blusters in. Week after week of Indian Summer days roll by and then one day I feel a crispness in the early morning air that tingles in my lungs, or a gust of cool air brushes past my cheeks and lifts the hair off my forehead with an unexpected puff. Each smell that wafts on the breeze brings with it visions of times gone by that are as sharp as the air.
>
> I see myself as a child walking home from school kicking through leaves and dragging a stick, anticipating the warm sweetness of chewy fresh baked cookies. I remember the feel of cold glass against my squashed nose as I watched the rain donning each leaf-bare tree with diamonds. Once again I hold a thick mug in my hands and smell the rich hot chocolate as it's steam warms my nose and fogs my glasses.

Notice Lisa's precise verb selection to convey feeling--days *roll* by, air *tingling* lungs, *brushing* hair and *lifting* it,

smell *wafting* on the breeze. She uses additional effective verbs in paragraph two: *kicking* leaves, *dragging* a stick, rain *donning* each tree with diamonds, cocoa steam *warming* the nose, *fogging* the glasses. This attention to word choice is one of Lisa's strengths that reveals her attention to detail, her close observational skills.

People make a good party.

> Over in the corner sit two people involved in an animated discussion. One wears the electric colored silks of a disco and the other jeans, a cotton plaid shirt, and glasses. By the punch bowl a well groomed girl in polyester pants fills the dip bowl and playfully slaps away the snitching hand of a boy with hair to his shoulders and patched Levi's. Beneath the bookcase a boy points out pictures of birds in a dusty old volume. On the couch a boy in a letterman's sweater watches. All throughout the room ironic looking groups cluster, reform, and spread. No one's eyes are downcast, no pained expressions adorn the faces of those present. Each person accepts and learns from the other's ideas and attitudes and no one is bored for very long.

Lisa subtly creates characterization through clothing, costume. Rather than *tell* us we have a socialite, a carpenter, a secretary-type, a hippie, a bookworm, or an athlete at this party, she *reveals* their personalities through their dress--a crafty use of description.

Re-creating a television commerical: Channel No. 5

> The scene is simple, the background, black, the foreground,--well, the foreground is Catherine Denuvieve, stretched out on her side, dressed in black, her long blond hair lacquered into place over white shoulders. She stares at us searchingly, persuasively, and the camera-man succumbs, moving in for a tight shot. "I like being a voman, I can be strong if I vish, or I can be gentle, and let my man take over. I like very much dis-(pause)-dis freedom." We are now seeing only her eyes, large, liquid, and alluring. Every male in the room from 9 to 90 is at attention, breathing heavily and popping their eyes. She reaches down and runs a well polished finger over a bottle of amber colored liquid, the subject of her clincher statement. "You know, dis f-r-r-r-r-agrance is

> vat it means to me to be a voman--Chanel #5, soft, but strong and capable." She pauses, again, and seems to have suffered a severe memory loss, for she shrugs her shoulders and again we here "Chanel no. 5, vat it means to be a voman." At least we girls hear it, the boys have grabbed their wallets and run out the door.

Lisa employs many techniques to show this characterization: 1) careful verb choice (*stretched* out, hair *lacquered* into place, *staring* persuasively as the cameraman *succumbs* to her pose); 2) close description, precise adjectives (*black* background vs. *blond* hair, *white* shoulders, eyes *large*, *liquid*, *alluring*; *well-polished* fingers running over a bottle of *amber-colored* liquid); 3) direct quote ("I like being a vo-man; I can be strong if I wish" etc.); 4) *reaction* by others--the boys have grabbed their wallets and run out the door, proving her hypnotic effect.

In examining Lisa's work with longer pieces of writing and revision we see that even a talented writer has room for growth. Here is her "Essay of Decision" in its entirety, a description of her deciding to run for eighth grade class treasurer. Note the underdeveloped segments.

THE RACE

> Early morning, a morning like so many other dreary 7th grade mornings. I stumbled into my classroom and dropped into my seat. Still half asleep I rested my chin in my hands and stared off into the deepest darkest corner the room had to offer, whereupon I promptly sank into a semi-catonic state.
>
> The room became somewhat quieter as the morning bulletin began to drone over the P.A. system. "Good morning" a very unenthusiastic voice greeted us. "This is the morning bulletin for May 24, 1975, I idly wondered why she felt compelled to tell us that tid bit of information, what were we expecting, a bomb threat? She went on, and on, and on...then, "Elections will be held for next years officers on June 8th. Intent-to-run forms can be picked up in the office starting today."
>
> Hmmmm, what was that about elections? "RUNNING FOR OFFICE", I had always imagined it literally, a

big race with giggling cheerleaders and heavy-weight jocks trotting far out in front and me panting behind them all. The thought was so unpleasant, that I dropped it. Besides, thinking was always painful for me at 7:30 A.M.

As the day wore on, however, I found the subject popping into my head at random moments. Just suppose, I said to myself, just suppose someone had a gun in my back and was forcing me to run for something, not that I'd want to of course, but just suppose. What would I choose? President would take up too much time--same with Vice-President. Secretaries have to have good handwriting--strike that one. Treasurer. "Treasurer," I whispered to myself. The word tasted good.

But it soon turned bitter. What was I doing? Letting stupid fantasies drift too close to my safely guarded reality. It would never do letting my well ordered life be jostled by something as unpredictable and risky as running for office. Wait a minute, wasn't "well ordered" just a synonym for "boring" in this case?

I looked around me to see my peers. Some seemed so cocky and self-assured, others sat crouched against the walls eating soggy tuna fish sandwiches with an air of martyrdom. "My potential subjects", I giggled.

"But I have no time!" my insides squealed, coming back to reality. The granite-willed side of me came to the fore. I gritted my teeth yes, I could give up Woody Woodpecker re-runs.

Imagination began to canter, trot and then run. Lisa, treasurer, maintaining razor sharp columns in neat ledger books. Lisa, treasurer, earning millions and bringing the school out of a financial slump. Lisa, treasurer, travelling to Washington at special request of the President to show the Secretary of the Treasury how to handle his books. And, choke, Lisa, treasurer, tripping on the speech platform at an assembly, and stuttering during a grimy-penciled campaign speech.

Awakening painfully from my reverie I found myself sitting on a bench smack in front of the office. A sample intent-to-run form staring me in the face.

I felt like I was on the point of a towering mountain with deep chasms on each side. A chance-taking something that had been pushed way down

deep for so long, flickered, and caught flame.

I reached for the silvery knob and flung open the door, the race had begun.

In this essay, Lisa again demonstrates her inventiveness with language; again she reveals that she is capable of colorful descriptions. Her weakness in this essay lies in her failing to tie together the steps of her process--1) being attracted to office, to 2) giving in to weakness (her boring place), to 3) making the move to run--into a conclusion about herself. Since her "boring place" is what moves her to take action, she needs to show that restless place. She also tells us that this place is "safer," but fails to show why--an essential element in explaining the decision process. Finally, she never really makes a point about herself, never comes to a conclusion. She hints at one by mentioning "I felt like I was on the point of a towering mountain with deep chasms on either side. A chance-taking something that had been pushed way down deep for so long, flickered, and caught flame." However, she does not show us what this "chance-taking something" actually means (an abstraction that demands elaboration).

Here is the revision of that essay:

THE RACE, REVISED

It was early Monday morning, a morning like so many other dreary 7th grade mornings. I stumbled into my classroom and dropped into my seat. Still half asleep, I rested my chin in my hands and stared off into the deepest, darkest corner the room had to offer, whereupon I promptly sank into a semi-catonic state.

The room became somewhat quieter as the morning bulletin began to drone over the P.A. system. "Good morning," a very unenthusiastic voice greeted us, "This is the morning bulletin for May 24, 1975," I idly wondered why she felt compelled to tell us that tid bit of information. What were we expecting, a bomb threat? She went on, and on, and on...then, "Elections will be held for next year's officers on June 8th. Intent-to-run forms can be picked up in the office starting today."

Humm, what was that about elections? "RUNNING

FOR OFFICE" I had always imagined it literally, a big race with self confident super-achievers, and extremely organized secretary types trotting far out in front, and me panting behind them all. The thought was so degrading that I dropped it. Besides, thinking was always painful for me at 7:30 a.m.

As the day wore on, however, I found the subject of the elections popping into my head at random moments. Just suppose, I said to myself, just suppose someone had a gun in my back and was forcing me to run for something, not that I'd want to of course, but just suppose. What would I choose? Secretaries must have good handwriting--strike that one. Treasurer. Visions of me as a super-achiever, incongruous as they seemed, began taking shape. For the first time, I saw myself as really achieving, becoming and doing something worthwhile. The picture was so rosy that the word almost tasted good as it rolled off my tonge in a self-conscious whisper.

But it soon turned bitter. What was I doing? Letting stupid fantasies drift too close to my safely guarded reality. It would never do--letting my well ordered life be jostled by something as unpredictable and risky as running for office. Up at 6:30, I was showered, dressed, and breakfasted by 7:15. Once at school, I went to and sat through the average "expected-of-7th-graders" classes. After school, while others ran off to practices or meetings of some sort or the other, I went home to homework and the Brady Bunch. Wait a minute, wasn't "well ordered" just a synonym for "boring" in this case?

"But I have no time!" my insides squealed, coming back to reality. But the granite-willed side of me took over, and I gritted my teeth. Yes, I could give up Woody Woodpecker re-runs. Imagination began to canter, trot and then run. Lisa, treasurer, maintaining razor sharp columns in neat ledger books. Lisa, treasurer, earning millions and bringing the school out of a financial slump. Lisa, treasurer, travelling to Washington at special request of the President to show the Secretary of the Treasury how to handle his books. And, choke, Lisa, treasurer, tripping on the speech platform at an assembly, and stuttering nervously while reading from a creased and well worn sheet of binder paper that holds her laboriously written campaign speech.

Awakening painfully from my reverie, I found myself sitting on a bench smack in front of the office, a sample intent-to-run form staring me in the face.

I felt like I was on the point of a towering mountain with deep chasms on either side. One side was a haven from all that was risky and uncertain. A place where I could dwell safely, without heavy responsibility. A place where no one might mock my puny efforts. But the other side offered new opportunities and new challenges; added responsibility and added priveleges. Things that may lift me up or tear me down, but things that would move me!

A chance-taking something that had been pushed down deep inside me for so long, flickered, and caught flame. I reached for the silvery knob and flung open the door. The race had begun.

The most striking aspect of Lisa's revision is her conclusion about herself. This time Lisa examines her own debating to learn something about her decision-making process. Because she takes the time to think about (elaborate) the importance of a class officership--"a real achievement, doing something worthwhile"--and weigh that consideration against her safer place of boredom--"up at 6:30...breakfasted by 7:15...classes...homework... the Brady Bunch"--she concludes that she needed to take action, that remaining "on the fence" too long is not something she easily tolerates. As students like Lisa practice drawing out their ideas, as they're pushed to explain their feelings to themselves, effective conclusions like Lisa's are indeed possible!

Lisa's comparison essay, written in response to reading *The Circle*, follows:

THE CIPCLE

In England, when children are quite young, they often play a game nick-named "hoop-n-stick." The equipment for the game consists of a dowel-like rod, a foot or so long, and a large circular hoop. The object of the game is to keep the hoop rolling, and this is accomplished by hitting it every so often with a sharp rap from the stick. One must take care, however, not to hit it so hard that the hoop topples, or so softly that the hoop receives no impact and therefore begins to fall to its ultimate demise. The

ideal is a short but jolting rap that supplies the circle with fresh energy to keep toddling down its intended path. Life in Somerset Maugham's play, "The Circle," resembles this game in goal, in equipment (figuratively) and, ultimately, in outcome.

It is essential to hoop-n-stick experts to keep the hoop up and rolling. In "The Circle," also, the players' goals are somewhat the same. Arnold and Clive's outlook on life--if only, they wish, life would keep on a smooth and steady course towards the prime ministership or at least great political power. In fact, throughout most of the play there is an undercurrent of straining to keep things on the up and up. Only totally acceptable behavior fits into this socially sterile atmosphere. Even Lady Kitty and Lord Porteous--notorious "hoop jostlers," themselves--have become confined by their own rules and commitments. It isn't until Maugham allows us to see some deeper facets of his characters that we see that the hoop of their life is about to receive another jolt.

For centuries, women have known that the best way to keep a little excitement in life is to make sure that her man is a little unsure of his position. Some women go so far as to request that their man be downright jealous. Lady Kitty is one of these. In act III she says delightedly..."Hughie, you may throw me down the stairs like Amy Robstart; you may drag me about the floor by the hair of my head; I don't care, you're jealous. I shall never grow old." First - actions - and the jealousy they bring are Lady Kitty's "stick." She uses them to speed things up when the hoop begins to wobble a little. Elizabeth, on the other hand, uses her frail features and woeful eyes to make a man begin to jump around and sweat a little. In act II, Elizabeth's constant threat of crying nearly pushes Teddie over the brink during their very emotional scene. Clive uses a different stick altogether. His reserved, man-of-the world way of speaking to women makes them painfully aware of their naivate and feel as if they haven't a leg to stand on.

Act III of "The Circle" is one big wobble after another--not only in the hoop of the characters lives, but in our own emotions. Maugham makes us really relate to Arnold and his

> plight and then, like a fickle schoolgirl, makes us feel like not giving Arnold the time of day. Where ten minutes ago reason and the cool prevailed, now love and roses are all that really matter. Through Maugham's masterstrokes, though, the story, (and our emotions) like their wobbling counterpart, manage to stay upright.
>
> On a grand scale, we can see the entire game laid out before us. Stick in hand, Mr. Maugham sets us out rolling with Kitty's jolting emancipation, and, just as the Cheney-Porteous-Lutton hoop is beginning to wobble and falter, makes us believe again in the power of love by using Elizabeth and Teddie to upright it with a perfectly dealt flick of the wrist.

Lisa's subject for comparison is delightfully original. She makes concrete the abstract image of the cyclical order of men's lives. By comparing the repeating sequence of family action to the "hoop-n-stick" game popular in England, Lisa creates a clear visual connection for the symbolic "circle."

On the other hand, Lisa neglects important elaboration in the body of her essay. Perhaps having become so enamored of her own inventive thesis, she fails to see her lack of development in supporting that thesis. In other words, the *idea* is the seller of the essay, not the supportive argument.

The sentences underlined show weakness in development. In the second paragraph Lisa needs to show additional examples of the characters' "straining to keep things on the up and up." If the total action in Maugham's play can be likened to "keeping the hoop rolling," then Lisa needs more instances of that sort of endeavoring.

In the next-to-the-last paragraph, Lisa admits the wobbling of the hoop, but then merely *tells* us that Maugham "manages to keep the action upright." Lisa needs to draw on specific courses of action that reveal the steadying of the game.

This essay is certainly no set-back. Lisa has an exciting thesis, an idea that certainly in itself *shows* the central abstraction of the play, i.e., "life is like a circle." Growth in developing ideas need not be limited, then, to X number of

examples in a given paragraph; growth in developing ideas can show up in the vividness of a thesis. Continuous work with evaluation and revision combined with an emphasis on being specific can, over a period of practice, train the writer to be more consistent in all areas of development.

Lisa's pretest and posttest essays were scored identically--each a *10*. There seemed to be no dramatic change in her ability to generate and interpret examples in a timed writing exercise. Rather than examine these essays here, trying to distinguish subtle differences that might render one more effective than the other, I am including her final essay for the course.

Students were assigned to take a "mock" University of California Subject-A Exam, an essay exam used for placement of entering freshmen in University Writing courses. The exam requires the students to respond to an essay question based on a reading of a non-fiction piece of prose. Students in my class were given an essay by John Ciardi titled "Is Everybody Happy?" an essay suggesting that true happiness is found more in the struggle to achieve happiness and less in the final accomplishment. Lisa's response is an agreement with Ciardi.

SUBJECT-A EXAM: FINAL ESSAY

> Throughout life, people of all ages try to avoid work. Children whine and cry about helping with the dishes or clearing the table, causing their parents great exasperation. Teenagers, watching T.V. in their comfortable bedrooms, shout to their parents that they're doing their homework when asked to take out the trash. An adult, in the peak of health, calls in sick, another takes a two-hour lunch to catch the "unmissable" pink carnation sale at Macy's, and they both generally "serve time" against the day when they can ultimately retire and stop going to work completely. Isn't it ironic then, that this same individual, after he has been handed the symbolic gold watch, is likely to become depressed, feel useless, decay mentally and keel over from a heart attack within five short years. It is only through diligent effort and meaningful expenditure of energy that we can attain happiness.

A mountain climber, tough and seasoned, is confronted with a seemingly unscalable sheer-rock cliff. He consideres the weary muscles he must force on, the sweat he must shed, and even the life he must place in danger, to get to the top. But he responds to the challenge, because that's why he's there, to attempt the extremely difficult. When he comes home, he thinks not of sitting passively at the peak of the towering mountain he set out to conquer, but of each steep, treeless, incline, each narrow edge and each threatening talus. The conquering: then, is not in the final resting state, but in the overcoming of each smaller trial. As Ciardi states it "Effort is the gist of it."

Why are there jigsaw puzzles? A beautiful picture is exploded into 1,001 tiny pieces and swept into a box which the public buys for six or seven hard-earned dollars. This Joe Public takes home, dumps the 1,001 tiny pieces onto a rickety old card table and can't wait to commence putting it together. Our jigsaw junkie will walk about bleary eyed, miss dinners, and stagger to bed at three in the morning 'til he presses the last piece of blue sky into place. And then what does he do with this picturesque scene? Does he shellac it and hang it on his wall? No, he crumbles this masterpiece of time, effort and energy into 1,001 tiny pieces and stashes them in a box, on a shelf, under his tennis racket with the broken string.

A wife keeps dinner warm till 9:00 for her husband who's been held up at a meeting, a father works overtime to earn enough money to take his family on vacation; a child gives half of his precious peanut-butter and liverwurst sandwich to a chum; a teenage girl loans her cherished "electric-blue" disco dress to her best friend for "the big date;" and night after night a tired mother reels out of bed three or four times to feed and diaper her newborn infant. One would think these people might feel angry, upset or used, but on the contrary, as they give deeply of themselves, their love grows deeper. When the other person ceases to need us, to come to us, to desire us, we begin to feel useless, unessential, and dispensable. Our own ego suffers, and we find ourselves pulling away from those we may have loved the very most.

Happiness is in the slope not the summit; in the solving not the solution; it is in the service,

not the reward. Those who escape work will find that they have only escaped happiness.

II.

The Experimental Study

Catharine Keech

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

One might ask two kinds of questions about the *Showing-Writing* training program: what is its effect on student writers, and how likely are teachers to use the program effectively? The case studies and the samples of daily student writing and revisions illustrate improvement teachers hope to see as they gradually introduce the program in their classrooms. But can teachers expect this kind of improvement for all or even most of their students? Do students finally become so accustomed to using specifics that they will produce them even on impromptu writing tests where there is no opportunity for revision? Is the increased use of specifics always an improvement? Will higher scores on an essay test actually be given to those papers containing more concrete examples?

To answer these questions, we posed three research hypotheses:

1. The overall writing of students who have special training in use of specifics will show greater general improvement as measured by rapid-impression or "holistic" scoring* than the writing of

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*Holistic scoring is a system of general impression marking that serves to rank order a sample of papers from weakest to strongest along a scale of points. Each paper is considered as a whole rather than judged for isolated attributes such as number of errors, handwriting, etc. For a more detailed explanation of this scoring system, see Keech, *et al., National Writing Project Guide to Holistic Assessment of Student Writing* (1981), Spandel and Stiggins, *Direct Measures of Writing Skill: Issues and Applications* (1980), or Cooper and Odell, *Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging* (1977).

comparable students without such training.

2. The students with special training will use more concrete examples and details in their writing than students without such training.
3. Regardless of training, students who use more specific examples and concrete details in their writing will receive better holistic scores than students who use fewer specifics.

Hypotheses two and three are not as redundant as they may sound. Too often evaluators ask only whether a new instructional technique produces generally superior writing as compared to that produced by other kinds of instruction. We know, however, that many kinds of instruction help students improve their writing and that writing improvement may consist of more than one kind of change in what a student does. We also know that many factors affect performance on any writing test. The simple question, do the students in the training program write better test papers at the end of a semester than the students who are not in the program, is an inadequate basis for judging the effects of a writing program. For example, a student (or an entire class), many write less well on the posttest because of external factors, such as depression or distraction even though his (or their) writing ability has actually improved. The reverse may also be true, making the posttest performance appear to reveal more growth than has actually occurred. A student's writing may become temporarily awkward or less controlled as she attempts to apply a newly mastered technique, so that a lower holistic score at the end of the term could actually indicate progress toward greater proficiency. Again, a student may over-use a new technique, and so temporarily write less effectively than before he learned the technique. Alternatively, a student may perform better on a posttest without applying any of the newly taught skills. The test topic or rhetorical task may be solved equally well by a variety of approaches, and the student may choose a different method from the one taught in the training program.

Where there is evidence that the students in the experimental program are not using the new skill, researchers must look not only

at factors affecting test performance, such as the nature of the test topic or the time limit, but also at the factors affecting learning. The question is, how was the response of these students to the materials different from the response of students who did increase their concreteness? It may be that use of the technique depends on the student's level of cognitive development or on previous writing experience. Classroom training may include more practice for some students than for others. By comparing the daily work of students in the program who use the new techniques with the work of those who don't, we may discover a kind of threshold of exposure to new ideas which students must cross before their writing habits are changed.

If students do increase their use of details and examples, to what extent does this increase influence higher holistic scores? Do readers generally respond positively to papers with a greater proportion of specific statements and images or do they prefer abstractions? We may expect that most readers prefer variety in degrees of abstraction--that solidly concrete papers are just as poor as infinitely abstract ones. Our experience suggested, however, that among high school students, empty generalization is a more frequent failing than long listing of details. For the students in the study, then, we would expect increases in uses of *showing* sentences to parallel improvements in holistic scores, unless, of course, there is a decline in some other aspect of performance that also affects holistic scores.

To answer question one, we relied on a widely used method of holistic scoring derived from procedures used by the Educational Testing Service. To answer questions two and three, we developed a special rating scale which classified sentences by their level of abstractness or concreteness. Then we could compare not only the papers written by students in the program with those of the untrained students, but also higher-scoring test papers with lower. Our purpose was not to establish that a certain proportion of abstract to concrete statements provides a magic formula for success, but to discover whether students in the program had

moved from writing unsupported generalizations to more richly textured details and whether such details are characteristic of papers with higher scores in this sample.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Our study evaluates the effects of the *Showing-Writing* training program as it was used by three teachers of advanced composition in three high schools over twelve weeks of instruction. Each teacher used the materials in one class (the experimental group) while providing alternative assignments in a comparable class (the control group). Except for the time spent on the training program or its alternatives, the two courses were as identical as possible: students studied the same works of literature, had the same number of major writing assignments, and studied the same lessons on sentence combining, writing thesis statements, or other writing skills.

The program's maximum effectiveness could best be measured in Rebekah Caplan's classes since she originated the materials, although it is conceivable that some teachers eventually may use her materials more effectively than she. As co-researcher, I helped ensure objectivity in collecting and processing data and conducting the holistic reading of papers. In addition, two teachers who had participated in BAWP inservices programs joined the research project to field-test the Caplan materials. Three important questions could then be added to an evaluation of the materials:

1. Will other teachers find the materials compatible with their particular curricula and their personal teaching styles?
2. Will teachers who are using the materials for the first time use them in the manner specified by the originator?
3. If adaptations are made, and less than the full program is used, will these students make gains as great, either in the use of specifics or in general test performance, as the students in the original Caplan training program?

The three high schools differed somewhat in their general English programs and in other factors affecting the academic aspirations and achievement of the students. Using a rough estimate based on parents' income and level of education and numbers of students applying for college, we may classify Ms. Caplan's school as high achieving, school number two as middle to low and school number three as middle level. The number of students in each class, by teacher, is shown below:

Teacher	Experimental	Control	Total
Caplan	25	17	42
Teacher #2	26	24	50
Teacher #3	22	15	37
TOTAL	73	56	129

All students were tested near the beginning and again at the end of the fall semester 1978-79 following a total of twelve weeks of instruction. We tested two modes of writing, narrative and argument. Two topics in each mode were randomly assigned to individual students as pretests or posttests, to counter the effects of differences in difficulty between topics. (See Appendix A for topics.)

Pretest and posttest essays from all classes were pooled and holistically scored by experienced readers. Argument essays were scored by different readers from those who scored the personal narrative essays, although both groups of readers used a scoring range of one (low) to six (high). Each essay was read twice for a total possible score of 2-12. (Sample essays demonstrating the holistic scoring of personal narrative essays are included in Appendix B; those demonstrating both holistic and analytic scoring of the argument essays are found in Appendix C.) Papers receiving scores from two readers more than one point apart were read a third time and the average of these scores was doubled for the

total score.

Only the argument essay was analyzed for program effects on the use of concrete statements. Readers were trained to assign each sentence of the essay to one of four abstraction levels:

1. highly abstract statement
2. more focused generalization
3. somewhat generally stated detail or example offered
4. specific, concrete detail, image, event

At the time of the pretest, students also took a fifty-minute objective test of verbal skills designed for the purpose by Paul Diederich of the Educational Testing Service. The objective test scores acted as a check on differences in initial verbal test-taking skills between each teacher's experimental and control classes, and between students in the three different schools.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Variations in Teachers' Use of the Program

In the history of Bay Area Writing Project inservice programs, many teachers adopt only part of a program or teaching idea. They come to use it with maximum impact only over time, either by gradually adopting all its parts, or by developing it in their own ways so that the new ideas become fully integrated into their classroom teaching practices.

As suggested by the use of the materials by the two teachers working with them for the first time, the most popular and easily adopted component of the *Showing-Writing* training program is the daily writing of paragraphs developed from *telling* sentences given by the teacher. The differences in improvement of students' holistic scores and use of concrete details must be interpreted in the light of differences in how the teachers used the program. While these two teachers were alike in limiting their use of the program to the daily writings, there were differences in the ways they applied this component (see below). These differences help us see how much variation may occur when teachers adopt a new

program. The differences are also important to keep in mind as we examine student performance in these classes.

In her experimental class, Ms. Caplan applied all aspects of the program, including the use of the daily writings to teach specific writing strategies, and the *show, don't tell* concept for diagnosis and as a revision guide. As she and/or her students read a fellow student's paper, whether an exercise or a major assignment, they would underline *telling sentences* which needed to be expanded with more *showing* details. The underlining served as a guide for revision.

In her control classes, on the other hand, Ms. Caplan did not use the expression "show, don't tell," although she often suggested that a student "be more specific," or "use more examples" in his revisions. Students in the control class, of course, did not frequently practice generating specifics in support of general statements, nor did they receive special instruction in the differences between abstract and concrete, or general and specific words and statements. Time used in the experimental class for discussing the daily practices was, in the control classes, devoted to extra reading, films, or extended discussion of regular work more often than to additional writing assignments.

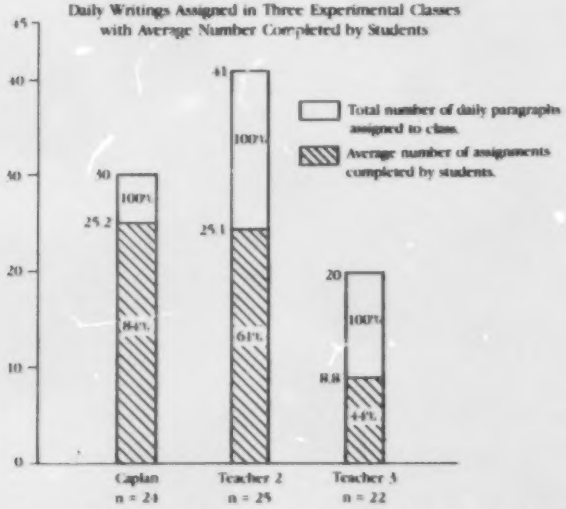
Teacher number two used the experimental materials in an advanced composition class, and an American Literature class served as the control group. Her two classes were similar in skill level and reading curriculum. This teacher reports that in her experimental class she assigned regular daily writings, but made no attempt to use the concept *show, don't tell* in her work with students on revising longer papers. She also did not move students into directed elaboration of telling sentences, or create sentences related to her other classroom teaching. Instead she continued throughout the twelve weeks to offer spontaneously created telling sentences for students to develop any way they liked.

Teacher Two approached the daily writings differently from Caplan in other ways as well in response to her class's special

needs. If students did not come to class with finished pieces (as Caplan recommends), she allowed them the first five minutes to complete their paragraphs. Since students appeared to enjoy writing these pieces, the teacher concentrated on keeping the exercise from becoming a chore by not insisting on faithful completion of all assignments.

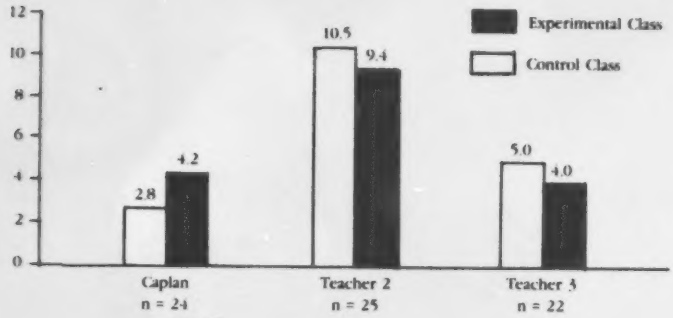
Figure 1 shows the number of daily writings assigned and

FIGURE 1
Daily Writings Assigned in Three Experimental Classes with Average Number Completed by Students



the average rate of return for each teacher in the study. We see that, while teacher two actually assigned more exercises than Ms. Caplan, and so had more days which included oral readings, her students completed only sixty percent of the assigned exercises and thus received on the average about the same amount of individual writing practice as Ms. Caplan's students, who completed eighty-four percent of the assigned writings. The lower rate of completion may have resulted in part from the poorer attendance rate in this teacher's classes as shown in Figure 2. The absentee rate for each teacher reflects the general absenteeism in the different schools.

FIGURE 2
Average Absences per Student During the Semester



For Teacher Two the greatest value of the exercises appeared to lie in the sharing of paragraphs at the beginning of each period. Unlike Ms. Caplan, this teacher had students read their own paragraphs aloud. After a few self-conscious attempts, most students were eager to share their interpretations of the telling sentence. She noticed that the sharing helped create a trusting atmosphere; many formerly shy and quiet students emerged as independent thinkers or talented writers, earning new respect from classmates. Moreover, students came to know each other as individuals, and the instructor became familiar with these students as writers much more quickly than with the students in her other classes.

Teacher Two appreciated the focus for writing provided by the telling sentences, preferring these to more open-ended topics like "describe your feelings about...." She sometimes used the practices as alternatives to other class assignments. If a student could not do a reading assignment, for example, he could develop a telling sentence instead.

Teacher Two did not introduce her control class to the concept *show, don't tell,* and did not offer any exercise in developing

telling sentences as alternatives to regular reading or writing assignments. In other respects, she reports, her teaching in the two classes was similar.

Teacher Three worked under special constraints since the prescribed curriculum for his two advanced composition sections was designed to be followed at a precise pace so that these students could participate in large group programs with other advanced composition sections in the school. The teacher was hesitant to alter his basic curriculum in any way but felt he could adopt the daily writing part of the experimental program in modified form. Other advanced composition sections were assigned, instead, a daily journal entry to provide them with an equivalent amount of work so that the classes could remain synchronized in their other activities.

Teacher Three's use of the program is an example of the most limited application of its concepts. As shown in Figure 1, Teacher Three assigned about half the number of exercises assigned by Teacher Two and two-thirds the number assigned by Ms. Caplan. His experimental class showed the lowest rate of return (forty-four percent) for the three teachers. Because of the restraints imposed by his set curriculum, he was able to devote only a few minutes each day to discussing the paragraphs in class. In attempting to make the best use of this limited time, he departed from Ms. Caplan's recommended procedure and chose primarily the best papers to share with the class. The oral reading time for Teacher Three's students, then, cannot be considered an opportunity for evaluation and feedback for each student, although it did provide an opportunity to learn from good student models.

Teachers Two and Three are, in several important ways, not typical of inservice teachers who might normally be expected to adopt the Caplan training program. Neither practiced the program at an inservice presentation where they could have written some of the assignments and discussed others. Instead, Ms. Caplan presented them with the materials individually and briefly explained the teaching theory and the research study procedure.

- Neither of the research teachers specifically chose the program because it seemed appropriate to their purposes or needs. Instead, both teachers first expressed interest in participating in a classroom research project, regardless of the materials being tested, and then were told about the instructional program. Frequently, when an inservice teacher adopts a teaching approach on the basis of a Bay Area Writing Project presentation, he or she actively seeks ways the new method might enhance an existing instructional program. Although some teachers may initially use no more than the daily writings as the two research teachers did, it is possible that others will attempt more from the start.

Hawthorne Effect

Often when teachers are especially excited about a new program, students work harder or perform better because they are affected by the teacher's enthusiasm and their own sense that they are receiving special treatment. In later classes, when the program has become an accepted part of the curriculum, teachers may be disappointed to discover that students don't show the same remarkable growth as shown by that first group. Conversely, if word gets around that a class has been singled out for a special new program, other classes (including the control class) may feel disappointed to be doing the traditional or ordinary coursework, and therefore may not try as hard to learn or to perform as well on tests. This phenomenon of heightened performance in response to a feeling of special treatment is known as the "Hawthorne" effect. We can only speculate about the extent to which it influences the outcome of any evaluation or research study.*

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*One teacher/consultant has suggested that the art of teaching is to create one positive Hawthorne effect after another. Our goal is to create new programs or become excited again about old ones, so that students *always* feel they're being given "special treatment."

In the present study, it is quite possible that both Ms. Caplan's and Teacher Two's classes experienced some Hawthorne effect. It seems fair to assume that the experimental program played such a small part in the lives of Teacher Three's students that their performance was probably unaffected.

Teacher Two reports that early in the year the student newspaper carried a story about the "interesting new idea" of daily writing exercises. For a brief time, she believes, this public attention may have made the experimental class feel more positive about the writings, although generally they were less than faithful in doing the assignments throughout the semester, except for one or two conscientious students.

Because of her authorship of the special program, Ms. Caplan's experimental class was videotaped by the Bay Area Writing Project late in the semester. While this special treatment did not affect their earlier writing, it could have positively affected the students' test performances. Also, Ms. Caplan's undoubted enthusiasm for her materials may have been communicated to her students, although she made every effort to conceal from students which was the control and which the experimental group. She simply explained that she was trying two different teaching methods to test a variety of assignments that might help students learn to write.

We can probably assume that although the Hawthorne effect might have been reflected in holistic scores for two of the teachers in the study, the kinds of writing changes revealed in the analytic scoring must be due to instruction and practice in the skills being measured, and not merely to the teacher's general enthusiasm for the program.

Differences in Testing of Students

Performance on writing tests almost certainly reflects more than differences in writing ability or even in instructional programs: it must necessarily reflect as well differences in the

way groups of students perceive the test occasion.

Each teacher in the study obtained pretest and posttest essays from his or her own students. All three teachers used identical forms of the test and similar procedures for coding and collecting papers. On the other hand, several important differences in the three situations may have affected student motivation to perform.

Teacher Three's classes might be described as having enjoyed a "neutral" test environment in comparison to the other classes. Both pretesting and posttesting were done over three-day periods with relatively few external distractions from school activities or other major testing. The experimental testing at the end of the semester preceded final exams in regular courses, although it came after completion of most major writing assignments. At both pretesting and posttesting, Teacher Three relied on students' general goodwill as motivation and did not suggest that the writing test would affect their class grades. This teacher's experimental students commented very little on their participation in the study or the fact that the work they had done was somewhat different from their partner classes' program.

Teacher Two's classes (both experimental and control), on the other hand, had test environments that minimized evidence of student writing growth. She believes that when students took the pretest early in the year, they were eager to perform at their best level. She announced (erroneously, as it happened) that the test results would be counted as part of the students' grades, as well as serving as data for a research study at the University. This presentation may have inflated these students' pretest performance levels. In contrast, students took the posttest after completing their final exams in all courses. Besides being test-fatigued, they clearly realized that their scores on these essay tests could have no personal consequences for them.

Ms. Caplan's classes may have been motivated to do well on both the pretest and posttest even though she said nothing to them about how their performance was to be judged or how it would

affect their course grades, because they were aware that she was engaged in an important research project. Ms. Caplan believes the students enjoyed taking the posttest, since it was administered after the major writing assignments for the course were completed and they would not be given a final exam. On the other hand, she feels that some of her top students who had worked hardest on their final papers may have let down somewhat on the posttest because the essays did not seem as serious or challenging as their recent work.

These differences among test situations may not be critical since, in all cases, similar factors affected both the experimental and the control classes of a given teacher. Unfortunately, extreme differences between students' motivation at pretesting and posttesting could obscure any benefits they might gain from their writing course, whether control or experimental. It would be difficult to judge how the program affects students' writing ability when they are poorly motivated to do their best work on the posttest, and so are unlikely to perform typically. Under the circumstances, it would be unwise in this study to draw any conclusions from comparisons of Teacher Two's experimental and control programs.

Reliability and Validity of Measures

The holistic measure. Ms. Caplan and I agreed that the only valid measures of a student's writing capabilities are samples of his actual essay writing as opposed to so called objective or short answer tests. Certainly writing samples are the most valid measure of the effects of a composition course which aims at teaching composing skills rather than mere editing skills. Of the many different kinds of writing we might ask students to do, two were considered particularly important and likely to be affected by the skills taught in the Caplan training program. The two modes of writing tested were *personal narrative essay* and *argument essay*. Within each mode two topics were offered so that students might write on slightly different subjects at pretesting

and posttesting. These topics with instructions for writing are included in Appendix A. Essays were read twice and scored holistically as a measure of student ability to compose in these two modes.

It is important to remember that the writing samples were collected as impromptu test essays rather than drawn from students' regular classwork. Students wrote for only thirty minutes on each topic, and were not encouraged to preplan or revise. No audience was specified in the writing prompt; rather it was assumed that students would write to "the general reader" usually addressed in composition tests. In studying the effects of the program, then, we have measured only one level of student performance: response to two types of essay questions in a timed-test situation, written for an unknown general reader. Results of the study might be different using different measures, for example, students' daily writings, their longer essays, or their writing for real, known audiences.

A writing test, to be valid, should inspire most students with a desire to write and provide a topic they are able to write about. In this sample of student writing, the responses were various and interesting, and students wrote with apparent enthusiasm. Only two students either refused to write an essay or argued with the topic. Both were Teacher Two's students at posttesting, where motivation was low.

As another measure of validity, students should show some degree of consistency across different performances--from pretest to posttest or from mode to mode. Students are not, however, expected to be entirely consistent, which is why the study includes samples of more than one kind of writing at both pretesting and posttesting. Correlations between scores of individual students on pretest and posttest essays are moderate for both argument and personal essay topics ($r=.45$, sig., $p=.001$). This level of correlation is not very strong but seems to be typical of the degree of inconsistency in student writing performance from one occasion to the next. (See Breland and Gaynor,

1979.) Within one test-sitting, either pretest or posttest, the same student is likely to produce essays in two different modes that correlate at about the same rate (for two pretest essays, $r = .38$, sig., $p \leq .05$; for two posttest essays, $r = .46$, sig. $p \leq .05$). Comparisons between mean holistic scores for the two topics within each mode of writing show that matched topics within a mode produced similar results--students did not generally find one topic more appealing or one more difficult than the other.

We have considered holistic scores on the two modes of writing, argument and personal narrative essay, separately throughout our reporting of the data, although it would be acceptable to combine scores from the two modes for a general index of student writing performance. Because we have reported the scores separately however, it is important to keep in mind that each essay score represents only one sample of student writing in a given mode on a particular occasion (pretest or posttest). Single samples of student writing can be misleading when one is judging individual student ability. But since we are judging groups rather than individuals, we are less concerned with whether a single student's performance is a good representation of what he can do. Instead we have assumed that odd factors which might cause some students to perform atypically will be equally distributed across groups. (This does not apply to factors affecting whole groups, some of which we have described above.) The scores we report below would have greater reliability if based on two samples of student writing for each mode at both pretest and posttest. But the reliability of readers and the fact that we intended to measure group not individual performance made this additional testing seem excessive.

According to Diederich (1974), with only one sample of student writing making up a unit of analysis, it is important to obtain a reliability of readers above $r = .60$. Reliability of readers in the holistic scoring was calculated by comparing the score awarded by the first reader to the score awarded by the

second. Readers of the personal narrative essays had a slightly higher rate of agreement than readers of the argument essays. Using Pearson's correlation coefficient as a measure of association between first and second readings of essays (before correcting for discrepancies), we found that for the argument essay, r = .71 (sig. at p = .001), while for the personal narrative, r = .80 (sig. at p = .001). These strong correlations indicate a satisfactory reliability of the scores assigned.

The analytic measure. The method of developing and applying the analytic measure is described in Appendix C, with sample student papers accompanied by their analysis sheets, which report the abstract/concrete ratings for each sentence in the essay and offer a brief discussion of the implications of each analysis. Because of limited funds it was possible to analyze only one of the two modes for the increased use of specifics. Since the application of the Caplan program to improved exposition or argument is less obvious than its application to narrative or personal essay writing, we decided to analyze the argument essays only. Further research is needed to determine whether the use of specifics of the type practiced in the Caplan program is different for the two modes. (A trial analysis of several personal narrative essays demonstrated that the method we developed for rating abstraction levels in argument discourse was not easily applied to narrative discourse. We are attempting to develop appropriate measures of concreteness in narrative discourse for future evaluations of student growth.)

In our present analysis of the argument essays, we classified each sentence in an essay according to its level of abstraction, on a scale of one (most abstract) to four (most concrete). The four levels classified the full range of sentence types found in the writing sample as a whole. Consequently, a given student might use only one or two of the possible levels in a single essay.

Twenty-five percent of the essays analyzed were rescored by the trainer to discover the reliability of the scoring method.

Of the 842 sentences in the sixty essays that were analyzed a second time, the trainer reclassified about seven percent, or sixty-two statements after discussion with the original rater. The reliability check acted as a re-training opportunity and helped the raters refine the system as problems arose. Most disagreement centered in the middle abstraction levels. In Appendix C, Sample D demonstrates the kind of paper which caused difficulty for raters and explains how disagreement was resolved.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pretest Measures: Comparability of Groups

The experimental and control groups of each teacher at the beginning of the program were comparable in performance on most pretest measures, with two exceptions, as shown in Tables One - Three. Table One shows that Teacher Three's control class scored lower on the Diederich Diagnostic Test of Verbal Skill than his experimental class, while Table Two shows this same pattern for both the argument and personal narrative pretest essays. These differences between experimental and control classes are statistically significant at p = .05. For Teacher Two, the pretest essays show no statistically significant differences between

TABLE ONE
Diederich Diagnostic Test of Verbal Skill
Mean Scores by Group

	Experimental			*Control*		
Class	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	N	$\bar{X}$	sd
Caplan	24	120.00	17.59	16	118.13	20.97
Teacher 2	25	104.16†	25.94	22	118.05*	28.15
Teacher 3	20	104.00†	20.42	15	95.00*†‡	25.25

Class	N	$\bar{X}$	sd
Entire Population	122	110.46	24.59

*sig. $p \leq 0.05$ contrasted with parallel experimental group same teacher
†sig. $p \leq 0.05$ contrasted with parallel Caplan group
‡sig. $p \leq 0.05$ contrasted with parallel Teacher 2 group

TABLE TWO
Holistic Scores, Argumentative Essay
(Scoring Range: 2-12 points)

Pretest

	Experimental			*Control*		
Class	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	N	$\bar{X}$	sd
Caplan	25	8.28	1.57	17	8.71	1.83
Teacher 2	26	7.11†	2.01	24	7.67†	2.71
Teacher 3	22	8.73‡	1.52	15	8.13*‡	1.77

Posttest

	Experimental			*Control*		
Class	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	N	$\bar{X}$	SD
Caplan	25	9.04	1.97	17	8.94	2.25
Teacher 2	26	6.12†	2.27	24	6.83†	2.12
Teacher 3	22	8.77‡	2.22	15	7.27*‡	2.12

* sig. $p \leq 0.05$, contrasted with parallel experimental group same teacher
† sig. $p \leq 0.05$, contrasted with parallel Caplan group
‡ sig. $p \leq 0.05$, contrasted with parallel Teacher 2 group

Change Scores
Differences Between Posttest and Pretest

	Experimental			*Control*		
Class	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	N	$\bar{X}$	sd
Caplan	25	0.76*	1.85	17	0.24	2.95
Teacher 2	26	-1.00*	2.21	24	-0.83*	2.50
Teacher 3	22	0.05	2.32	15	-0.87*	1.81

* sig. $p \leq 0.05$.
We may reasonably assume the change from pretest to posttest is greater or less than zero.

TABLE THREE
Holistic Scores, Personal Narrative Essay
(Scoring Range: 2-12 points)

Pretest

	Experimental			*Control*		
Class	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	N	$\bar{X}$	sd
Caplan	25	10.04	1.37	17	9.82	1.51
Teacher 2	26	8.00†	2.00	24	8.54†	1.74
Teacher 3	22	9.18†‡	1.40	15	8.40*‡	0.91

(Entire Population: N = 129; X = 8.98; sd = 1.72)

POSTTEST

	Experimental			*Control*		
Class	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	N	$\bar{X}$	SD
Caplan	25	10.76	0.93	17	9.47*	1.01
Teacher 2	26	7.35†	2.00	24	8.33*†	2.20
Teacher 3	22	9.45†‡	1.60	15	9.33‡	1.60

(Entire Population: N = 129; X = 9.06; sd = 1.99)

*sig. $p \leq 0.05$, contrasted with parallel experimental group same teacher
†sig. $p \leq 0.05$, contrasted with parallel Caplan group
‡sig. $p \leq 0.05$, contrasted with parallel Teacher 2 group

CHANGE SCORES
Differences Between Posttest and Pretest

	Experimental			*Control*		
Class	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	N	$\bar{X}$	sd
Caplan	25	0.72*	1.57	17	-0.35	1.50
Teacher 2	26	-0.65*	2.73	24	-0.21	1.61
Teacher 3	22	0.27	1.83	15	-0.93*	1.57

(Entire Population: N = 129; X = 0.07; sd = 1.95).

*sig. $p \leq 0.05$.
We may reasonably assume the change from pretest to posttest is greater or less than zero.

experimental and control groups, although her control class performed slightly better; but the control group performed unexpectedly well on the diagnostic test, producing a statistically significant difference between experimental and control scores on this measure only. Ms. Caplan's control and experimental classes showed no statistically significant differences on any of the three measures of performance before the training program began.

Comparing groups across schools, we find that Ms. Caplan's students outperformed all other students on the pretest personal narrative essay, and on the diagnostic test (with the exception of Teacher Two's control group). For the argument essay, however, there is no statistically significant difference between the Caplan students and Teacher Three's students. Teacher Two's experimental students performed less well on both pretest essays than all other groups. Her control students, on the other hand, while performing less well on the argument essay than either Teacher Three's or Ms. Caplan's, performed as well as Teacher Three's students on the personal narrative essay. On the diagnostic test, Teacher Two's control and experimental students performed as well or better than Teacher Three's. In general, Teacher Two's classes appear to have performed less well than other classes on the writing sample, but they performed comparatively better on the objective test. This finding may suggest greater practice by these students in taking objective as opposed to essay tests, unlike Caplan's students and Teacher Three's students who have participated for several years in schoolwide holistic assessments of writing skills.

Since these initial inequalities in performance levels exist among schools, and since each teacher used the program materials differently, no attempt was made to compare statistically the performance of students across schools, or to combine experimental groups across teachers to make a comparison with combined control groups. Instead, each teacher's experimental group was compared with his or her own control group. The differences in the apparent success of the training program from teacher to teacher may

be attributed then, in part, to differences in amount and kind of training, or to differences in the testing, but in part may also be the result of initial differences between students in the three schools. Within each school, the relative positions of control and experimental groups on pretest measures should be kept in mind while comparing posttest scores.

Comparing Scores: The Holistic Measure

It is clear from Tables Two and Three, containing the holistic scores on pretest and posttest essays, and from Table Four, which reports the relative numbers of students who showed improvement from pretesting to posttesting, that Ms. Caplan's experimental class is the only one to show statistically significant improvement on both the argument and the personal narrative essays. Although, for the argument essay, the experimental class performed no differently statistically from the control class on the posttest, the fact that these students began somewhat lower in performance than the control students but ended up somewhat higher made their overall gain statistically greater than zero, while the gain for the control class was small enough to be explained by chance variations in performance.

Again on the personal narrative essay, the gain for Ms. Caplan's experimental class was statistically significant, while her control class did not improve its performance significantly. In this case, the experimental group's posttest score is significantly higher than the control group's. The control class's slight drop in mean score on the posttest is not required to explain the superiority of the experimental class performance on the posttest. The gain by the experimental group would have made this difference statistically significant even had the control class held to the same score or done slightly better.

A count of the number of students showing improvement in different classes, as reported in Table Four, demonstrates that the improved mean scores by Ms. Caplan's experimental class are

TABLE FOUR
Distribution of Improvement from Pretest to Posttest by Group

		Caplan		Teacher 2		Teacher 3	
		EXP	CONT	EXP	CONT	EXP	CONT
Improved on both essays	N	7	3	3	1	4	3
	%	28.0	17.6	11.5	4.2	18.2	20.0
Improved on one posttest essay with second posttest score equal to pretest	N	8	3	2	4	3	2
	%	32.0	17.6	7.7	16.7	13.6	13.3
Improved on one posttest essay, second essay lower than pretest	N	5	3	9	7	6	5
	%	20.0	17.6	34.6	29.1	27.3	33.3
Total improved	N	20	9	14	12	13	10
	%	80.0	52.9	53.8	50.0	59.1	66.7
Posttest essays both same as pretest essays	N	2	1	2	2	2	1
	%	8.0	5.9	7.7	8.3	9.1	6.7
One essay same score, pre-post; one essay lower at posttest	N	1	2	5	3	3	3
	%	4.0	11.8	19.2	12.5	13.6	20.0
Both posttests lower than pretests	N	2	5	5	7	4	1
	%	8.0	29.4	19.2	29.2	18.2	6.7
Total unimproved	N	5	8	12	12	9	5
	%	20.0	47.1	46.2	50.0	40.9	33.3
Total students	N	25	17	26	24	22	15

not the result of a few students who made dramatic improvement, but rather of a general improvement by a large percentage of the class. Since individual performance on essay tests is frequently uneven, the percentage improvement for Ms. Caplan's experimental group is unusual. Twenty out of twenty-five students, or 80 percent, scored higher on at least one posttest essay. Of these twenty, seven students, or 28 percent of the class, scored higher on both posttest essays. Only five students in the experimental

class (20 percent) showed no improvement.

In Ms. Caplan's control class, nine out of seventeen, or 52 percent of the class, scored higher on at least one posttest, a result 28 percent lower than that of the experimental group. Of these nine, three, or 17 percent of the class, scored higher on both essays compared with 28 percent in the experimental group. There were eight control students (47 percent) who did not raise either score on the posttest, and of these, five students (29 percent) scored lower on both essays, compared with only two (8 percent) in the experimental class. Since these two classes were well matched in ability on all pretest measures, and since it appears from teacher reports that the two sections did much the same work except for the time spent on the experimental program and its alternatives--more even than the classes of the other teachers--it would seem that the striking difference in performance improvement between the experimental and control groups can be attributed to the training program. An analysis of the argument papers for traces of program effects--the greater use of specifics--bears out this interpretation of the holistic data, as demonstrated below.

The experimental students of Teachers Two and Three, in contrast to Ms. Caplan's, did not outperform their control groups on posttest gains. The most striking result for these teachers is the uniform drop in performance by Teacher Two's classes across both groups for both essay topics. Her control class, shown by pretest measures to be slightly more competent than her experimental class, tended to lose slightly less, especially on the personal narrative essay, but the factors in the test situation described above appear to have influenced performance negatively for both groups. It might be argued that the special training gave the experimental classes a small edge, so that their loss should have been less than the control's. The following analysis of the argument essays for uses of concrete details, however, provides grounds for interesting speculation about why the special training seemed not to improve holistic scores for Teacher

Two's experimental students.

Teacher Two's classes, experimental and control, had equal proportions of students who improved on at least one essay compared with students who made no improvement--both classes were divided 50-50 percent.

For Teacher Three's classes, where the program materials reportedly were little used, it is hard to explain the holistic results. The control group, which performed slightly less well on both pretests than the experimental group, lowered its post-test score on the argument essay (sig. at $p = .05$) while improving its personal narrative mean score (sig. at $p = .05$). In contrast, the experimental group remained relatively stable on both essays, making no statistically significant changes in performance. Because of the uneven performance by the control class, it is difficult to predict what the experimental class might have done without the training program. Under the circumstances, we must conclude that the holistic results for Teacher Three's students cannot be clearly associated with program effects. The analysis of use of specifics by these students in the argument essays, reported below, provides little help in determining program effects, but does help to confirm the association of higher holistic scores with greater use of concrete details.

The proportion of Teacher Three's students who improved on at least one posttest essay was slightly higher for the control class (66 percent) than for the experimental group (59 percent). The important difference between control and experimental groups is that, among control students, almost all improvement occurred on the personal narrative essay, while almost all decline in scores occurred on the argumentative papers.

Abstract/Concrete Levels in the Argumentative Essay: The Analytic Measure

Scores based on an analysis of levels of abstraction/concreteness in the argument essays were used to answer two questions:

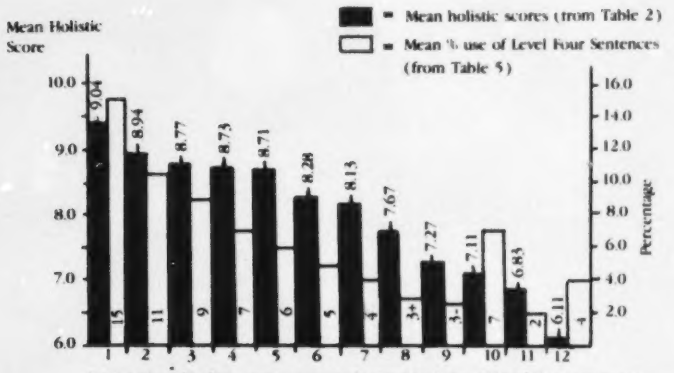
- Is greater specificity associated with higher holistic scores?
- Does the training program result in greater use of specifics?

Use of details and holistic scores. Do readers generally respond better to papers with a high proportion of concrete details? To measure the association between use of details and general effectiveness of writing, we first calculated the correlation coefficient for two variables: the holistic score of an essay (2-12), and the total number of abstraction levels a student moves across (0-3). The range of movement was calculated by subtracting the top (most abstract) level used from the bottom (most concrete) level used by the student (e.g., 4-1 = 3).

A moderate positive correlation was found between these variables ($r = .37$, sig. $p = .05$) suggesting that in this mode, one of the factors which may affect readers positively is the use of a larger range of abstractions, which includes both the most concrete and the most abstract kinds of statements.

A parallel relation between the use of concrete details and the holistic scores on the argument essay is suggested by non-statistical comparison of the mean scores of groups on two variables: the holistic scores and the use of level four (most concrete) sentences. Out of 3362 sentences generated in the entire analytic sample, only 221, or 6 percent were level four sentences (with an additional 3 percent accounted for by sentences which bridged levels three and four). With the exception of Teacher Two's experimental class, the relative use of level four sentences by each group, pretest and posttest, parallels the relative mean holistic score of that group, as shown in Figure

FIGURE 3
Use of Concrete Statements and Holistic Scores



Rank order of holistic mean score with associated use of Level Four sentences for each group: pretest and posttest means reported separately.

(Note: To identify each group, locate the *mean holistic score* on Table 2.)

Three. Other factors than failure to use concrete details are apparently of greater importance in determining the lower holistic mean score of Teacher Two's experimental class, both pretest and posttest.

As shown in Table 5, the only statistically significant improvement in mean holistic score from pretest to posttest occurred in the Caplan experimental class which moved from 5 percent use of level four sentences to 15 percent. For this group, it seems, the shift to greater concreteness was clearly associated with a significant improvement in mean holistic score. In addition, the statistically significant decline in holistic scores for both of Teacher Two's classes on the posttest is accompanied by parallel declines in use of level four sentences, as was the large drop in holistic score for Teacher Three's control class, which wrote 11 percent fewer level four sentences at the posttest.

These findings should not be interpreted as suggesting that the absence of concrete details guarantees poor scores or that

TABLE FIVE
Comparisons of Concreteness in Argument Essay, Pretest and Posttest

Teacher	*Pretest Sentences* Level 4 n	%	Level 3-4 n	%	Levels n 100%	*Posttest Sentences* Level 4 n	%	Level 3-4 n	%	Levels n 100%	*Change (% only)* Level 4 %	Level 3-4 %	Total Gain*
Caplan													
Experimental *(25 cases)*	16	(0.05)	25	(0.08)	329	56	(0.15)	29	(0.08)	376	0.10	—	0.10
Control *(17 cases)*	14	(0.06)	17	(0.07)	249	28	(0.11)	18	(0.07)	260	0.05	—	0.05
Teacher 2													
Experimental† *(25 cases pre, 24 post)*	23	(0.07)	16	(0.05)	328	9	(0.04)	8	(0.03)	256	-0.03	-0.02	-0.05
Control *(22 cases)*	10	(0.03)	14	(0.05)	303	5	(0.02)	7	(0.03)	249	-0.02	-0.01	-0.03
Teacher 3													
Experimental *(20 cases pre, 18 post)*	20	(0.07)	20	(0.07)	304	26	(0.09)	33	(0.12)	279	0.02	0.05	0.07
Control *(15 cases pre, 14 post)*	9	(0.04)	15	(0.06)	240	5	(0.03)	10	(0.05)	189	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02
	Pre/Post Combined					*Mean Concreteness in Total Sample, Pre/Post Tests Combined*							
Totals in Sample	221	(0.07)	212	(0.06)	3362	0.13							

* Concreteness is defined as the mean percentage of level four added to the mean percentage of level 3-4 sentences; the mean percentage is defined as the number of concrete sentences divided by the total number of sentences generated by a group. This yields the same result as calculating the percentage of concrete sentences (levels 4 and 3-4) for each essay and taking the average percentage for a group.

† Analysis of concreteness data is missing for some pretest and posttest essays.

the use of many level four sentences guarantees high scores on general effectiveness of writing. Sample L in Appendix C, for example, receives a high score without any use of level four sentences. What emerges strongly from an examination of the bulk of students' papers, however, is that students earning middle range scores and most students earning poor scores might improve their performance dramatically by introducing *showing* sentences in greater proportion to their *telling* sentences, and that merely good papers can become excellent through effective use of concrete language. Sample N, with a score of 8 and Sample O, with a score of 12, are the pretest and posttest samples of a particular student in the Caplan experimental class. These samples are not unique, and they demonstrate a kind of change in tone or style of argument that appears in several students' writing in the training program.

In observing the shortcomings of papers with very low scores, it should be noted that students may lack the information or actual experience which they need to support their generalizations, especially in the topic comparing men and women. One effect of the training program might be to encourage students to observe their own experience more carefully or to acquire more information about commonly argued issues. Without training, students are very likely to argue from wishful thinking ("Of *course* it's better to be a man! I'M a man!") or from the vaguely stated beliefs of others ("Women are slowly creeping into men's fields.") The Caplan program challenges students to "show," which some may not be able to do without acquiring and examining increasingly complex and precise information. Unfortunately, an impromptu test on a subject they haven't prepared does not measure a student's willingness or ability to *find* concrete evidence for different positions, but only measures what evidence he or she already has available.

To the teacher of English or rhetoric these findings will come as no surprise. Readers of student work know from experience that just one vivid concrete example can often transform undistinguished prose into memorable communication. Our purpose here is not merely to reestablish what our experience has amply demonstrated, but to

develop a relatively objective measure which will allow us to demonstrate that our teaching of this particular skill has had the intended effect. Our findings are consistent with our classroom experience: the use of specifics as recorded by our measure makes some difference to readers, but it does not make all the difference. This conclusion gives us some reassurance that our analysis of abstraction levels is a valid measure of a real factor in good writing. The analysis reveals at least one important difference between Ms. Caplan's control students and the experimental students who made significant gains in overall effectiveness of writing while increasing their use of concrete details. On the face of it, the measure as developed appears to describe particular results that are appropriate to the aims of the program and is sensitive enough to register differences between individuals and groups. Using this measure then, let us turn to the next questions:

1. Does the training program consistently result in greater use of specifics regardless of which teacher uses it?
2. What evidence of program effect can we find among all experimental students?

By continuing to examine holistic and analytic results together, we may raise the question of whether it is not only quantity, but quality of concreteness that differs from group to group.

Effects of Training on Use of Details

Table Five shows the proportion of level four sentences and sentences which crossed levels three and four, for each group, pretest and posttest. Table Six shows the mean range of movement (number of levels crossed in an essay) for each group. As a result of the large relative proportion of middle level sentences (levels two and three) across all groups, the reporting of mean abstraction levels by group would obscure differences among groups which are better revealed by a direct examination of relative use of level four sentences, or by the mean range of movement across abstraction levels.

TABLE SIX

Mean Range of Movement Across Abstraction Levels by Group, Pretest and Posttest Argument Essay

Teacher		Pretest					Posttest					Change in Mean
		n	Median	Mode	$\bar{X}$	sd	n	Median	Mode	$\bar{X}$	sd	
Caplan:	Experimental	25	2.30	2	2.375	0.495	25	2.70	3	2.583	0.584	0.208
	Control	17	2.50	3	2.438	0.629	17	2.70	3	2.529	0.624	0.091
Teacher 2:	Experimental	25	2.18	2	2.174	0.717	24	2.13	2	2.130	0.694	-0.04
	Control	22	2.10	2	2.209	0.523	22	1.96	2	1.940	0.539	-0.26*
Teacher 3:	Experimental	20	2.50	2	2.500	0.514	18	2.21	2	2.188	0.750	-0.31*
	Control	15	2.21	2	2.250	0.622	14	2.13	2	2.167	0.577	-0.08

* 15 percent fewer students used full range on posttest, although among the students who used levels 4 or 3-4, several generated a large number of such sentences, so mean use of concrete sentences went up for this group while mean range went down. (See Table 5.)

The most striking change in use of level four sentences occurs in the Caplan experimental class where the students being trained to use concrete details increased their use from 5 to 15 percent. Interestingly, this group used a relatively large number (8 percent) of sentences crossing levels three and four in both their pretesting and posttesting. What seems to have changed for these students is the number of sentences they devote exclusively to the most concrete kind of detail.

Ms. Caplan's control class shows the third highest gain in use of level four sentences, moving from 6 to 11 percent, suggesting either that Ms. Caplan's teaching includes other ways to reinforce the use of concrete examples besides the methods that are part of the training program or that for her students, normal maturation or academic experience outside of English class accounts for some increase in the use of specifics. The gains in concreteness for both of these classes is reflected in their holistic gain scores, with the larger gain in concreteness by the experimental class paralleling the statistically significant holistic gain of this class compared to the merely visually apparent gain of the control class.

Ms. Caplan's experimental students show, in Table Six, a statistically significant increase in mean range of movement across abstraction levels. This finding, together with the distribution of holistic scores, suggests that the large increase in concrete sentences was not confined to a few students, but rather that a majority of students appear to have increased the total range of levels of abstraction included in their writing. Note that this is the only group which changed the abstraction level most frequently used by students from pretest (level two was most common) to posttest (level three was most common). For all other groups except Caplan's control group, level two was most commonly used in both pretesting and posttesting. Caplan's control group, which had superior holistic scores on the pretest, used level three most commonly on both test occasions. It appears that these slightly superior control group writers already had

a relatively low "center of gravity," while the experimental group learned during the course of training to shift slightly toward more concrete writing overall.

Teacher Three's experimental class also shows a strong increase in use of concrete statements, second only to Caplan's experimental class if the totals for level four and level three-four sentences are combined. On the other hand, the mean *range* of abstraction levels decreases for this class. A check of the raw data tallies shows that fifteen percent fewer of these students actually used concrete statements on the posttest, lowering the group average for use of the full range of abstractions. On the other hand, of the students who did use concrete statements on the posttest, most used relatively large numbers of them: one writer produced nine, another ten. It is as if the training exercises on developing concreteness, while not affecting most of the class, had a strong effect on a few students. These highly concrete writers also happened to have high holistic scores on both pretest and posttest. It appears that a few of the stronger students in this class, who may have been among those whose successful daily exercises were chosen as exemplary for the class discussion, tended to adopt the new technique on an impromptu test, while others did not, preferring to stay with the slightly more abstract style which had served them well in the past. The distribution of holistic scores for this class is consistent with this interpretation. Although the mean score for the pretest is almost identical to the mean posttest score, the pretest (total range = 5-11) includes no top scoring papers, while on the posttest (total range = 3-12), two students made top scores. It is at least conceivable that the training program, although only minimally used in this class, may have contributed slightly to the greater spread of performance on the posttest by this group. Overall we may conclude that the effect of the training program on Teacher Three's experimental class was minimal, however. There was no widespread adoption of the strategy of using more concrete examples,

and the most common level of abstraction remained level two on both pretest and posttest.

In contrast to the three groups who increased their concreteness, Teacher Three's control group and both of Teacher Two's classes decreased their use of concrete sentences. Of these, the decrease was smallest in Teacher Three's control class, accompanied by a negligible drop in mean range of abstraction levels. It is not clear that this drop in use of concrete level sentences contributed to the statistically significant drop in holistic scores for this group. It may be that since this group began with a relatively low percentage of concrete statements on the pretest, any decrease without a compensating increase in some other form of idea development might affect the general quality of these essays. It is not possible to decide on the basis of our data what factors might explain the drop in use of concrete sentences or the lower holistic scores of this group on the argument essay. Their superior performance on the posttest personal narrative essay makes us question whether this group provides a meaningful picture of what might be expected to occur without the training program. Clearly other strong differences existed between these two classes in their initial make-up, their experiences during the year, and/or their attitude toward the testing.

Teacher Two's classes pose interesting questions for this study. The experimental group generated a reasonable proportion of concrete sentences on the pretest but had a low holistic score compared to other pretest groups. The control class began with a much lower proportion of concrete sentences and a slightly better holistic score (though still low compared to other groups). Both of these groups performed worse on the posttest holistic measure, and both decreased their use of concrete statements.

Teacher Two reported enthusiastically on her use of the training program. How might we explain the fact that her experimental class decreased its use of concrete details and its holistic scores? At least two explanations may be offered for this finding:

1. It is possible that limiting the training program to use of daily practices, as Teacher Two did, with no carry over of this training into work on revision of regular class assignments and no special instruction given for directed elaboration of daily sentences, results in no lasting effects of the training or provides insufficient reinforcement to cause students to increase their use of specifics on a writing test.

2. A second explanation for this finding is supported to some extent by the performance of the control class. It is possible that lack of motivation caused by factors in the test occasion (reported above) is directly responsible not only for decrease in holistic scores, but also for failure of the experimental group to increase their use of concreteness in writing. It is likely that students at this level find it easier to rely on loose generalization than to support their generalizations with concrete examples or details. Hence, when they are writing with minimum motivation and effort, their use of such details will be among the first factors of good writing to be sacrificed. In this case, this teacher's experimental students, like her control students, may have failed to use specifics because of lack of motivation to perform, not because the training had no effect on their ability to do so.

A further explanation is needed for the fact that Teacher Two's experimental group shows a remarkably high use of level four sentences in their pretest essays, considering their low position in the ranking of holistic means (tenth of twelve). The holistic mean which ranks fourth in Figure Three (Teacher Three's experimental group's pretest mean) is much higher (sig. at $p = .05$) than the tenth holistic score, but these two groups produced the same proportion of concrete sentences in their essays. This fact suggests an important qualification in our evaluation of the training program and of our measuring instrument. We have already noted that many factors other than concreteness affect the holistic score of an essay. In addition, however, it is important to

recognize that concreteness itself is not a simple variable for which *more* means *better*. Our analysis measures only quantity of concrete and abstract language, not quality. It is possible that the two groups which produced 7 percent concrete statements differed not only in factors unrelated to the use of concrete language, but in the actual quality of their specifics. In addition, they may differ in the way they used specifics in the essay as a whole. A qualitative reading of papers from these groups suggests a distinction between two uses of concreteness. When a writer uses specifics *in support of* abstract ideas, we can expect almost certain improvement of argument discourse. Where writers use specifics in lieu of abstract reasoning, the reader may remain unsatisfied that the argument has been adequately developed. It is possible that a lack in the quality of the *abstract* statements made by students cannot be fully compensated for by the use of specifics.

Using the mean of Teacher Three's experimental group (ranked fourth in Figure 3) as a predictor, we would have expected Teacher Two's experimental group to have scored much higher on their pretest as a direct result of their relatively frequent use of concrete details. Clearly these groups of essays differ in important ways regardless of their similarity in quantities of concrete language. These differences are crucial in evaluating writing and teacher, and remind us that numerical counts, no matter how good, can never be substituted for holistic reading.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The data of this study, both qualitative and quantitative, support several conclusions:

1. In general, throughout the sample population, greater use of concrete details tended to be associated with better holistic scores for individual students. We found that the range of movement across abstraction levels was positively correlated with holistic scores ($r = .37$, significant at $p \leq .05$). In addition, groups with higher mean holistic scores generally had higher proportions of level four sentences.

2. A qualitative examination of the argument essays revealed that the presence of supporting details was an important characteristic in distinguishing upper-half from lower-half papers in the holistic scoring range.

3. Further examination of papers in the argument mode showed that, while concrete details were typical of better papers and noticeably lacking from most poorer papers, this pattern was broken in some cases. In one instance, sustained and competent use of abstractions adequately compensated for the absence of supporting concrete details. In other cases, it was clear that the use of many concrete details did not adequately compensate for the absence of meaningful abstractions or for other weaknesses in the writing.

4. No consistent pattern of improvement of holistic scores or increase in use of specifics could be observed across all three experimental classes as compared to the three control groups. We attribute this finding to differences in use of the material, procedures used in testing, and possibly critical differences in the

initial ability of students of the three participating teachers.

5. In Ms. Caplan's experimental class, where students received frequent daily practice with prior instruction and immediate evaluation as well as use of the teaching concept to guide revision, two things occurred which did not occur in her control class and did not occur in any classes of the other teachers in the study:

- students improved their mean holistic scores (statistically significant at $p = .05$) for both argument and personal narrative writing.
- students increased their use of concrete details in the argument essay, as measured by range of movement across abstraction levels and use of level four statements (statistically significant at $p = .05$).

6. In Teacher Two's classes, both experimental and control students performed *less* well on the posttest holistic score (statistically significant at $p = .05$). Both groups also used fewer concrete statements in their writing of posttest argument essays (statistically significant at $p = .05$). This result is attributed to a lack of motivation to perform on the posttest as compared to the pretest as a result of differences in the testing conditions.

7. In Teacher Three's experimental class, there was no statistically significant gain in mean holistic score in either mode, and no gain in use of concrete details in the argument mode. This finding is taken to suggest that use of materials in this class, described as minimal, was insufficient to effect changes. Statistically significant changes in control class holistic scores could not be explained. The control class improved performance on the personal narrative essay while performing less well on the argument essay at posttesting. There was no measureable change in use of concrete details by this group.

The findings for Ms. Caplan's classes are consistent with findings of two studies which tested the effects of practice and evaluative response of writing performance. Buxton (1958) showed that continuous evaluation and revision, when it occurs together

with increased frequency of writing practice, helped students improve writing performance markedly. He found that other students, who received evaluation and made revisions, but who wrote infrequently, made significantly less improvement in their performance. In a complementary study, McColly and Remstad (1963) demonstrated that increased frequency alone cannot bring about significant improvement in writing when it is unaccompanied by evaluation and guided revision.

We may take the Caplan training program as a model of how to provide regular guided practice interacting with evaluation and opportunity for revision. The striking improvements in her experimental class's performance, together with the dramatic increase in use of the writing technique emphasized in instruction, is evidence of the effectiveness of this teaching/learning combination.

The results of the study for Teacher Three's classes suggest that there may be a threshold for the effectiveness of practice and evaluation, even when these occur in combination. Infrequent use of a new technique, as suggested in the Buxton study, may limit the chances of its adoption by student writers.

The findings for Teacher Two's classes appear to be part of an altogether different phenomenon which demonstrates not program effect but the effects of motivation on test performance.

On the basis of this study, we urge teachers who adopt the Caplan materials to provide, where possible, for frequency of practice, faithfulness in completing assignments, full class-sharing of responses to provide feedback to the writer and models for other students, use of the *Showing-Writing* concept in guiding revision of student compositions, and use of directed elaboration in the daily practices to provide constant new challenges and practice in a variety of ways to develop ideas with concrete details.

It is also important to note that the goal of the training program is not merely to increase the number of specifics included in a paper. Students should be helped to see that details are introduced to convey meaning, not merely because they lend concreteness to a piece of writing. Our analysis, by merely counting

the number of concrete statements, overlooks differences in quality of detail and in how the details are used in relation to abstractions in the essay.

The program as used by Ms. Caplan appeared to improve not only quantity but quality of concreteness in student writing. In the case of the relatively proficient writers in Ms. Caplan's experimental class, the training led to writing that was judged to be more proficient, with greater reader appeal. Among other students, however, especially the less proficient writers in Teacher Two's classes, the quantity of specific detail they used in their pretest essays was not always matched by quality. A study of individual essays from these two groups suggests that there may be two kinds of concreteness. A basic kind of concrete writing may come easily to students who do not customarily make abstract statements in writing. For them, a description of facts is offered *in lieu of* generalizations about the meaning of those facts. A second-order use of specifics seems to appear only in the writing of students who have become capable of sustained abstract discourse. For these writers, concrete details are offered *in support of* generalizations about the meaning of those facts.

It remains for future investigators to determine how students develop the ability to use abstract and concrete statements together to create sophisticated argument or expository discourse. Younger or more inexperienced writers might be studied to determine whether the training program will help them become better at observing details, and indirectly, more able to generate good abstractions.

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Appendix A

The Writing Test

The writing test drew on four topics. Each student wrote on two topics at pretest and two topics at posttest. At each testing time, a student wrote on one topic in each mode, narrative and argument. Four forms of the test were used, sorting topics so that each topic was given to equal numbers of students at pretesting and posttesting. Students in both experimental and control classes were randomly assigned one of the four test forms described below, so that all forms were used about equally.

Argument:

A. *Television is a bad influence.* Agree or disagree with the statement using examples where possible.

B. *It is better to be a woman than a man.* Agree or disagree with this statement using examples where possible.

Narration-personal experience essay:

C. Describe something you enjoyed doing as a child.

D. Describe something from which you learned a lesson.

The four test forms combined topics in the following ways:

	Pretest		Posttest	
Form 1:	A	C	B	D
Form 2:	C	A	D	B
Form 3:	B	D	A	C
Form 4:	D	B	C	A

Appendix B

Narrative Mode
Student Samples with Holistic Scores

Paper No. 1

Holistic Score: 2 + 2 = 4

Well when I was little I would do crazy things, one of them was: I would lay myself in the middle of my street so cars would stop and I would pretend I was dead! Now I think I learned my lesson, cause once when I did that the car almost ran over me cause the driver didn't see me!

Paper No. 2

Holistic Score: 3 + 3 = 6

I learned not to swear at my sister or in front of my mother. I found that if I did this I would get the old "Wash your mouth out with soap" treatment, which reunied my whole appetite for dinner. and left a awful taste in my mouth all day and night. But I still didn't learned my lession until I said a few things to my sister and my mother grabbed a small bar of soap to put in my mouth and it sliped down my throat. After that I learned my lession and became a morman.

Paper No. 3

Holistic Score: 4 + 4 = 8

lesson of the day. When I was in 8th grade I took spanish with all my friends. When we were in class together all we did was talk and mess around. To get out of class all we had to do is ask the teacher if we could to get a drink of water, in spanish. She let us go and by the end of the period we were all outside. We figured she wasn't very smart, letting us out every day, so we kept on doing this. At the end of the quarter she gave use our grades, and the grade I got, I earned.

The only thing in spanish I learned was how I could get a drink of water, and I wouldn't get very far with what I knew and their water. The lesson I learned was that school is a place for learning not fooling around, and that I shouldn't take advantage of the teachers.

Paper No. 4

Holistic Score: 5 + 5 = 10

When I started driving. I picked up a very bad habbit from my mom and my friends: speeding.

After only having my car and license for a week, I remember telling my friend, "Sue, I have to slow down because I know I'm going to have an accident!" Sure enough, that same day I hit a curb. In doing so, I knocked the front end out of alignment, totalled the rim, and punctured the tire.

My mom didn't get terribly upset, but the whole thing cost us $45. She told me I should slow down because something worse could happen.

That accident kept me slowed down for about two weeks, and then I started speeding again.

One day after practice, I was taking a girl home. She lived about 15 miles away, and I had never been out by where she lived before. I was going about 40 mph when she told me "You're supposed to turn here!" I touched my brakes lightly and turned onto the free-way ramp. I then realized that there was a divider in the road. I slammed on the brakes and crammed my wheel to the right, but I was out of control. I went up over the divider, scraped bottom and totalled two signs.

My friend and I both sat there for a moment in shock. I don't really remember the first thing I said, but I know it wasn't very ladylike.

I got out and checked the damage and it was really bad. I had ripped up two tires, almost folded the rim in half and found a dent and a whole line of scratches. I didn't cry, but I was very close.

A man, who later turned out to be a counselor at my school, stopped to help me change one of the tires. I never have felt so dumb.

When I got home and told my mom she said I was never to speed again. She also told me I was paying for this accident, which ended up costing about $200.00 I then vowed never again to speed, but....

Paper No. 5

Holistic Score: 6 + 6 = 12

It started to rain right after school. But, that wouldn't stop me from jogging two miles. I drove home and slipped into my oldest jeans, a sweatshirt and my well-traveled jogging shoes.

I felt guilty when I first ran into the rain. It just isn't "proper" for a teenage girl to run in the rain without an umbrella, a woolen scarf and mittens.

The initial shock wore off after about one mile. I completely forgot about the pouring rain. I casually waved at my neighbors as they drove past, staring at me as if I were from mars. I didn't feel crazy. I purposely jumped in a huge puddle, forcing drops of water and their friends to leap across the street on their own. Then I slushed across the grass and walked into my house.

My long blonde hair was separated into several thick strands, dripping like faucets onto our shag carpet. The front of my jeans were darkened with water, while the back was practically dry. I changed from my water logged clothes into some dry clothes.

I loosened my muscles, doing a few stretching exercises. I didn't feel guilty about running in the rain or crazy just because other people may think I was crazy. Instead, I felt refreshed and happy. That's all that matters.

Appendix C

Argumentative Mode
Student Samples with Holistic Scores and Analyses of Abstraction Levels

The following samples of student essays on the argument topics (Topics A and B) demonstrate the quality of writing at each level of the holistic scoring range. Attached to each sample is the analysis of abstraction levels sentence by sentence.* In preparation for this analysis, the entire group of readers analyzed sample papers after the first few had been rated by the trainer/researcher. The group actively helped to refine the system of analysis, both during training and during the actual rating.

For those who wish to attempt to make an analysis of their own student papers before and after the Caplan training program, we include a brief explanation of the kinds of statements typical of each abstraction level. It is important to note that we did not begin with this rubric, nor use any such description in the training of our readers. We do not know if it would have helped or hindered to do so. We encourage other researcher/teachers to attempt to classify statements from actual student papers, creating distinctions among abstraction levels in the same way they create

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*The concept of concrete and abstract as applied to sentences used in English paragraphs is described in the Oregon Curriculum *Language/Rhetoric IV* (1970) textbook in a manner accessible to students and teachers. Teacher/researchers interested in more technical attempts to study coherence devices in English and the relation of concrete to abstract statements are also referred to Halliday and Hasan (1976), and to Davis and Nold (1979).

distinctions among holistic scoring ranges *before* trying to describe those levels objectively. The important thing is to create a system for distinguishing the relative degree of concreteness in the writing of the specific students being tested on the specific topics given them. It is possible that additional instruction in the development of ideas through effective use of middle-level abstractions will create the need for five or even six levels of abstraction in describing a particular sample. As it was, several readers in our study felt that five levels of abstraction would have made rating the sentences easier and would have given us more precise information about the uses students make of abstract and concrete statements.

In teaching for specificity, the teacher is encouraged to make these abstraction levels explicit for students but is also strongly urged *not* to make any particular pattern of movement from concrete to abstract a prescription for composing. The very best papers in the sample, while moving across several levels of abstraction, are not bound by a rigid formula such as the five-paragraph essay.

General Rubric for Classifying Abstraction Levels

LEVEL I: Includes the most general statement of thesis or position taken on the given prompt. Usually borrows words and phrases from the topic as given.

1. T.V. is a bad influence.
2. I agree that women are better off than men.

LEVEL II: Includes statements using abstract language to specify one or more of several possible reasons, examples, or general truths that appear to support the proposition made at level one.

1. Both commercials and programs have a bad effect on the minds of children, particularly.
2. Women are freer to express emotion;

they can act frail and be helped by men; and they can get hired easier.

LEVEL I - II: Many good student writers open their essays with sentences that cross these first two levels.

1. I agree that television can be a bad influence because of the amount of crime and violence typical of the evening programs and because of the pressure of commercials.
2. I agree that it is better to be a woman than a man in this day and age because of the new freedoms that women are experiencing while men remained trapped in their old roles.

The "because of" construction, like the separate level two sentences above, allows these writers to make a contract with the reader, outlining the points that will be made in support of the general proposition.

LEVEL III Includes statements which refer to or describe in general terms instances which illustrate the level two "truths." These may cite hypothetical instances or continue to use generalized subjects like "crime shows" or "commercials" but become more specific in naming some aspects of these. Statements at this level may make reference to the beliefs or experiences of the writer.

1. In crime shows like Baretta or Kojak, people can see in detail how robberies or murders are committed.
2. Women can graduate from West Point, work as ditch diggers, or even just stay home with the kids.

EXTENSION OF LEVEL III OR RETURN TO LEVEL II: It is common among the students in this sample for a writer to return to a level two sentence immediately after introducing level three or even level four evidence in order to comment on the significance of that evidence, to answer imaginary opposition, to explain how these

instances came about, or to offer an explanation of what the evidence implies. Sometimes such a comment is a combination of levels two and three:

- People may get the idea that they could carry off a crime, even though the criminals in these shows usually get caught (level two). Kids especially might get ideas about how to break and enter (level three). You might say that these shows are really an example of how not to act, but alot of people get wrong ideas from them (level two).

LEVEL IV: Includes three kinds of statements:

A. Passing, undeveloped reference to specific persons or to individual instances of examples cited in level three, such as "last week's Baretta showed how to open a locked car" or "I got hired right away because I was female." Such statements are not what is meant by Caplan's "showing writing" concept, as B and C below are, but readers needed a way to classify these more concrete or specific statements in a way consistent with the classification of level three and up.

B. Statements which describe concretely one or more "for instance" examples of level three assertions.

C. Extended narratives of particular personal experiences which they see as illustrating a general truth expressed either at levels three, two, or even one. These may also be concrete descriptions of the experiences of a hypothetical individual or of "women in general" or of "most children watching TV."

Sample A

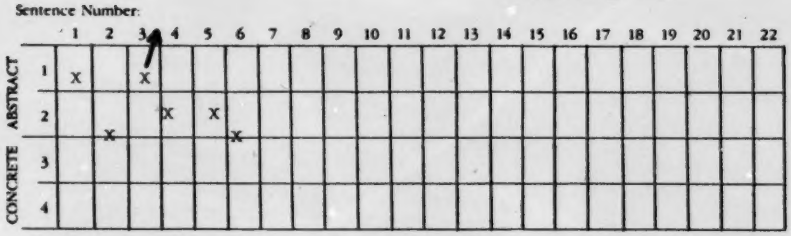
Topic B - Holistic Score: 1 + 1 = 2

(1) Of course it is better to be a man. (2) Because I'm a man. (3) What a dumb question. (4) I think it is better to be a man because, men are still considered a little superior over women and this has both financial and social advantages. (5) Women are more equal than before, but men still have the advantage.

(6) For one there aren't that many jobs associated with women, but women are slowly creeping into mens fields.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1
Bottom Level 2
Total Range 1



Sentence number three might be considered a meta-comment and coded outside the four abstraction levels, since it comments on the question rather than contributing to the argument. It is difficult to know how to characterize the statement "Because I am a man." This "reason" appeared in several low papers, and in spite of the reference to a particular person (the speaker), we decided to classify it as a second level statement since the writer did not explain why he felt satisfied with his own sex. Sentence four is an excellent topic sentence for a fully developed essay, with sentence five as a reasonable qualifier. Unfortunately, the writer has too little commitment to the topic and/or too little information to support and expand on his generalizations. Sentence six sounds like a good topic sentence for a first paragraph, but reflects the student's uncertainty about whether his opening claim can be substantiated. This paper shows that students with fair control of syntax and mechanics can find themselves unable to mount an argument for lack of concrete information.

Sample B

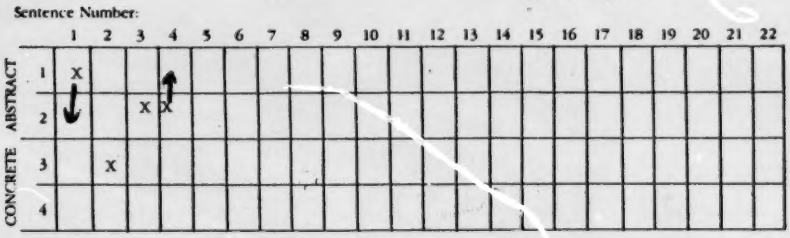
Topic A - Holistic Score: 2 + 2 = 4

> (1) Television is a bad influence in a way that most movies consits of crimes and murder. (2) For example it teaches how to use tools to open doors, windows and cars. (3) When the actors and actresses are committing any crime on T.V. most people who are watching get ideas on how to do the same things. (4) I think that movies like detectives, murder, stealing, etc. should be cut off from the T.V. programs because it really has a bad influence on people.

This paper is in many ways a typical response among low papers. This student has a single point: that crime shows provide a kind of "how to" guide for would-be criminals. But the piece has the coherence of a fairly tightly constructed paragraph. While attempting little, it succeeds in what it attempts and is helped by the graphic reference to tools that open doors, windows and cars.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1
Bottom Level 3
Total Range 2



The first sentence moves from the general statement of the argument, "T.V. is a bad influence," to a particular reason why: that it "consists of crime and murder." In a longer paper in which several reasons were offered in support of the main position, this would be a good paragraph beginning, specifying which reason is to be discussed, and so would function as a level two sentence. Sentence two becomes quite concrete; although not mentioning particular programs, it describes very precise kinds of program content which have particular effects. Sentence three explains the effect in more general terms, making a claim about how most people respond to this kind of program. The last sentence is also level two, specifying which kinds of programs should be taken off T.V., but the final clause is ambiguous. It is not clear whether the student means that only these programs have a bad effect, in the sense

described, or whether "it," meaning T.V., has a bad influence in general because people take the behavior of actresses and actors as models for their own behavior. We read the last clause as an attempt to return to the most abstract level, the level of the original topic statement, and indicated this by the arrow moving to level four.

Sample C

Topic B - Holistic Score: 3 + 3 = 6

(1) I agree with the statement above; it is better to be a woman than a man. (2) Women are allowed to show emotion, whereas men are not. (3) Too many men keep their feelings bottled up, which is not healthy. (4) Women, however, are not afraid to share their feelings with a friend, or to cry on someone's shoulder. (5) Woman don't have to worry about breaking down, whereas, most men are constantly holding back. (6) When it comes down to emotion it's better to be a women

(7) Women can be themselves easier than men can. (8) Some men act like they don't have feelings, but inside their crying: their holding back, so how can they be themselves? (9) Women come right out with their feelings by saying, "I think I'm going to cry." (10) Men pretend more than women do. (11) Women are more honest with themselves. (12) Most women are better listeners than men. (13) Women can sit for hours just talking and listening to each other, however, men are afraid that they'll tell to much about themselves.

(14) There are a lot of ways women have it harder than men, for instance, in business. (15) All in all, women are mentally stronger and healthier than most men.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1
Bottom Level 3
Total Range 2

	Sentence Number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
ABSTRACT	1	x																					
	2		x	x			x	x			x	x	x		x	x							
CONCRETE	3				x	x			x	x				x									
	4																						

This is a good example of a paper full of unsupported generalities, most of them restating a single idea. The student uses a persuasive strategy common to oral argument--we might call it *insisting*--where one makes sweeping positive assertions on a single level of abstraction, hoping that sheer quantity will convince even in the absence of logical connectives, qualifying distinctions, or concrete evidence. This student has discovered the appeal of such generalities as "women are more honest with themselves," but has not yet learned how dubious they remain when unexplained and unsupported.

Sample D

Topic A - Holistic Score: 3 + 3 = 6

(1) I disagree with this statement. (2) Television is a very good source of entertainment and knowledge. (3) If someone thinks that a program is a bad influence on their children they can simply change the channel. (4) The television also keeps us informed with public, national, and world news. (5) It allows us to hear public opinion through shows allowing free speech for people wanting to state their opinions. (6) It is a source of advertisement for businessmen and politicians. (7) People who think a program is too violent are not facing reality. (8) No matter how much they are against it, violence is in our society. (9) Many shows provide knowledge, such as National Geographic and Jacque Costeau. (10) There are many comedy shows which allow people to relax, laugh, and forget their anxieties.

(11) Altogether television is a creative and wonderful invention. (12) Like anything, it is good when used properly.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1
Bottom Level 2
Total Range 1

Sentence Number:

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
ABSTRACT	1	X										X											
	2		X	X	X	X		X	X				X										
CONCRETE	3				↓	↓	X			X	X												
	4																						

This student has a good number of reasons for the position he takes, but each of them is unexplored. When suddenly in sentence nine the writer provides specific examples as evidence, it serves to make the absence of examples elsewhere even more noticeable. Sentences four, six, seven, nine, and ten would each make good topic sentences for paragraphs; instead they are strung together, the advantages of T.V. randomly salted with responses to arguments about the disadvantages.

Sample E

Topic B - Holistic Score: 4 + 4 = 8

(1) Woman, naturally, are better. (2) Being a woman I do have my prejudgc towards the male sex, but being a woman has its advantages. (3) These advantages are, women don't get drafted, women get jobs easier and women get pampered.

(4) The first advantage is women don't get drafted. (5) In the first place I feel very strongly against war, a mans' game. (6) Through out history men have started all the wars and I feel if they want to fight instead of talk, let them. (7) Even if the people of this country wanted women to fight, I can't, I wasn't raised to fight.

(8) The second advantage in being a woman is they get jobs easier. (9) As an example I will use myself to prove this point. (10) In going up for my interivew (I won't say where) all I had to do was wear shorts. (11) I was hired before I even opened my mouth. (12) many of my friends were hired because they too, were woman (13) most of them were hired by male interviewers the rest by a female interviewers who hired them because of "Womans Lib". (14) This system may be unfair to the male sex but, then, I'm not a male.

(15) The last advantage is women are pampered. (16) Though I dont know why woman are pampered or how it started, but I know I enjoy it. (17) Since the image for a woman is believed to be helpless I have doors opened for me, things carried for me and the biggie, I don't pay for anything on dates. (18) This saves me alot of time an money. (19) Even at work where part of my job is to empty the garbage, my male co-worker won't let me, because I'm a woman.

(20) The advantages in being a woman are we get pampered, we get jobs easier and we dont get drafted. (21) We I heard all the talk about who's the better sex, I think to myself isnt it obvious

already woman have the intelligants to get all the advantages.

Unfinished words and careless punctuation did not seem to interfere with this student's ability to communicate. The five-paragraph essay format gave her a clear and coherent structuring device: she finds three advantages of being a woman and supports each in turn. But what rescues this paper from mediocrity and causes readers to ignore the mechanical faults and to put it in the upper half is the strong personal voice. The examples, drawn from personal experience, are vivid and convincing. We have no doubt that, for this young person, being a woman has its advantages.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used:

Top Level 1
Bottom Level 4
Total Range 3

Sentence Number

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
ABSTRACT	1	x	x																				
	2			x	x	x	x	x	x						x	x	(x)				x	x	
	3							↓					x	x					x				
CONCRETE	4									(x)	x	x						x		x			

The essay looks easy to classify at first. Sentence three gives us the basis for three paragraphs' topic sentences --four, eight and fifteen--and is essentially repeated as part of the closing paragraph, in sentence twenty. So far so good. But this student does not introduce conventional examples in support of her three points. Instead, she expands each by appeal, first to her own beliefs, then to her own experience. Because she refers specifically to herself, rather than making claims for people or women in general, these sentences become classifiable as level four immediately. There are two problems, however. For sentences five, six, and seven, she is not referring to specific instances of anything. For these, readers were instructed to drop the parenthetical phrase, "I feel," and read the sentences as if they were flatly stated tautologies, generally a useful procedure throughout the rating. The second problem lies in such meta-comments as "I will use myself to prove this point" (9) and "Though I don't know why...I know I enjoy it." (16) These are like asides to the reader and do not seem to function as part of the argument. An abstraction level was more or less arbitrarily assigned, but parentheses were added to show that this sentence commented on the argument being made rather than contributing to it.

Sample F

Topic A - Holistic Score: 4 + 4 = 8

(1) "Get off that box!" (2) A day doesn't go by that I don't hear those words. (3) "The Box" or "The idiot box" are the ways my parents define the word television set. (4) The fighting and arguing always starts because of my little brother who watches an overwhelming amount of T.V., at least four hours everyday. (5) It is amazing how much time he has to waste watching everything that flashes on the screen from "Hawaii five-O" to "Big Time Wrestling" while I hardly find the time to watch one program per week.

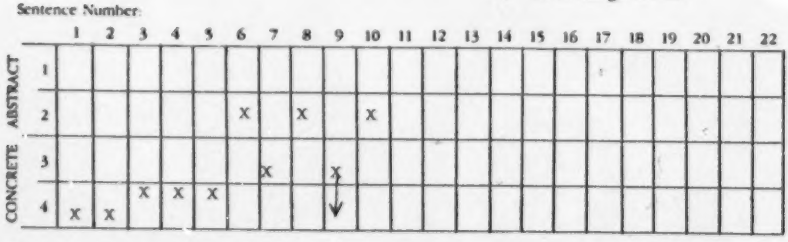
(6) All those comercials and programs that clog his mind; also have a great deal of influence over him. (7) Programs such as "The Streets of San Francisco" and "Starsky and Hutch" teach a child about violence, robbery, rape and many other crimes.

(8) Many advertisments also are a bad influence. (9) The ciggaratte comericals teach that smoking is glamorus and the junk food comericals, especially the cerials teach the younger minds that eating sugar coated pink and green shapes can be good for you.

(10) Commercials like these can throw a child off as far as reality is concerend not to metion the eaquily bad influence of television programs.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 2 / Bottom Level 4 / Total Range 2



This paper is interesting in two respects. First, it begins with a concrete episode and direct quotations--quite effective in this case. Second, it never quite reaches level one, a full statement of the thesis the essay is arguing. Sentence ten comes closest to filling that function. In spite of--or because of--this rather atypical approach to argument, the paper was scored as an upper-half paper. Sentence nine stands out for its use of details which make children's cereals *sound* poisonous without ever making that claim.

Sample G

Topic A - Holistic Score: 5 + 5 = 10

(1) The greatest thing about the United States is the freedom offered here. (2) Everyone has freedom of choice. (3) Television is one example of freedom of choice. (4) No one is forced to watch a program or not to watch another. (5) Even though some television programs display violence or sex, it is the right of every citizen to decide what they want to see. (6) A program can not influence anyone unless they desire it to.

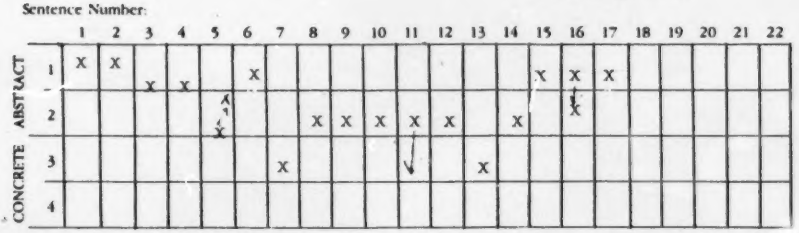
(7) Many shows, for example. Kojak and Barretta, show its viewers violent street crime. (8) These could be considered an influence of how one is not supposed to act and not necessarily lead them on to copy these examples. (9) However, like most decisions in life, some will choose to follow the "wrong path". (10) These people are only wrongly influenced because it was their choice, (11) no one forced them to sit in front of the tube at 8:30 and watch chanel whatever.

(12) Critics complain frequently about the content of television programs. (13) They, however, seem not to take into consideration the education offered in some such as Sesame Street and Teens today. (14) From these, large numbers of children in the United States have undoubtedly benefited.

(15) Television can be considered good or bad depending on which programs and what outlooks one takes. (16) Everyone is free to switch it off if they feel a flick not worthy. (17) Television's influence only depends on the individual.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1-
Bottom Level 3+
Total Range 3



This paper appeared difficult to analyze at first, because the introductory sentences about "freedom of choice," if classified as level one, pushed all the following sentences down one level in comparison with similar sentences in other student essays. Sentences three and four "Television is one example of freedom of choice. No one is forced to watch a program..." begin the discussion of television itself, which is where most other papers commence. Raters solved the problem by classifying sentences one and two as more abstract than the frame. As a result, although the student does not use level four sentences, he can be said to have a total range that crosses three level-boundaries.

In this context, sentences four, six, and sixteen say much the same thing. Sixteen is classified as slightly more concrete because of the qualifying clause, "if they feel a flick is not worthy."

Sample H

Topic B - Holistic Score: 5 + 5 = 10

(1) The woman spends two hours smearing foundation, moisturizer, eye shadow, mascara, and lipstick on her face. (2) She doesn't do it for herself, but for her boyfriend. (3) I don't think it's better to be a woman than a man because a man has better job opportunities and the society places less emphasis on a man's appearance.

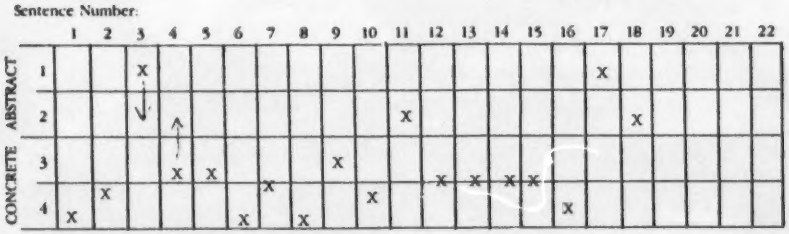
(4) Even though women have come a long way since their days when they were only considered baby machines, they still do not have the job opportunities that a man has. (5) If two equally qualified executives, a man and a woman, are due to be promoted to vice president, the man will probably be promoted. (6) My mother was subject to that kind of discrimination, although I'm sure many women have outgained their male colleagues. (7) Sure, a women who is physically capable can become a ditch-digger. (8) But, will the males she work with stare at her like a diamond in a bucket of rhinestones, or swat at her like a fly? (9) Either way she won't fell comfortable at work. (10) So, her opportunities as a ditch-digger are being smothered.

(11) Also, the society places much more emphasis on a woman's appearance. (12) A man with gray hair looks distinguished. (13) But, a woman with gray hair is old. (14) A man who is twenty pounds overweight is a "hunk." (15) But the thin woman is "in." (16) Sometimes I could to without the make-up, nylons and diets. (17) I am a woman, so I cannot say it is <u>better</u> to be a man than

a woman. But, with the job opportunities and the emphasis on a woman's appearance, I feel it is also not better to be a woman.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1
Bottom Level 4
Total Range 3



This student is deft at choosing concrete images to portray general conditions, especially in paragraphs two and three. Raters felt that sentence one was more concrete than any other sentence in this essay--the student was clearly reaching for a lively opening before introducing her thesis sentence. As a result, the first paragraph is somewhat disjointed--the rhetorical effort was not entirely successful. But the clever juxtaposing of reactions to physical characteristics (sentences twelve through fifteen) in the two sexes, and the imaginative imagery of sentence eight is an unusually effective use of concrete language to make an abstract argument.

Sample I

Topic B - Holistic Score: 5 + 6 = 11

(1) I disagree with this statement because I feel being a member of either sex has both its advantages and disadvantages. (2) I believe that being a man is no better than being a women or vice-versa. (3) Men as well as women have their weaknesses, but they are all people. (4) I don't think it is fair to declare an entire half of our world's population better than the other half. (5) We do not have the authority or the knowledge to make such a judgement.

(6) An advantage of being a man today is that even though the sexes have become more equal than before, we are still living in a man's world. (7) Men have more and better opportunities. (8) This doesn't especially mean that men are better, but they have taken the initiative in the past and have placed themselves above women. (9) Men's dominance over women did not make women inferior, but only made

their roles different. (10) Women are, and always have been, important in what they do. (11) Even when they were forced to stay in the home, their role was still very important. (12) Their roles have changed now, but this does not make them any better than before.

(13) Advantages are now facing women in our society today. (14) Many times they are given job's first just because they are women in order to balance the number of men and women. (15) Women have always been able to really express themselves while men have been made to believe that they must be strong so they often hold in their true feelings. (16) Women also have a better choice of what to do. (17) They can plunge into the pool of women's equality, or they can fall back on their traditional roles. (18) They don't have the pressures that are forced on men.

(19) I hope that I have shown that there is really no better sex. (20) Men have had better opportunities but today women are coming back. (21) There are advantages of being a member of either sex as well as disadvantages. (22) Because of this, no sex is better than the other.

A common problem with this topic for students is the ambiguity of the word "better." Many students remain unclear whether better means more advantaged, more important, superior, or just luckier. This student addresses this confusion directly and devotes his paper to attempting to distinguish between differences in people and differences in roles. The paper necessarily remains quite abstract, and is nonetheless successful because of the level and quality of discussion. The student is clearly struggling to qualify abstractions with other abstractions which move him closer to an understanding of the relative advantages of current sex roles without suggesting that either sex is innately superior. His discussion does not require level four concreteness for development of ideas, unlike many papers whose arguments are based on convincing the reader of relatively simple assertions or generalities.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1
Bottom Level 3
Total Range 2

Sentence Number:

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
ABSTRACT	1	X	X	X	X	X														X			
	2						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X				X	X	X
CONCRETE	3											X			X	X		X	X				
	4																						

It is easy to imagine two levels of concreteness *below* such sentences as, "They can plunge into the pool of women's equality, or they can fall back on their traditional roles." But because of the highly abstract context of this argument, these sentences serve as relatively concrete examples of the advantages "facing women today." The paper lacks in other ways, primarily in that it falls somewhat short of working out the distinctions it attempts. This student needs more time to work out the implications of his logic but not necessarily to decorate his argument with level four details.

Sample J

Topic A - Holistic Score: 5 + 6 = 11

(1) I believe that most television is not a bad influence. (2) Many of the complaints and arguments that one hears often have opposing sides which make much more sense.

(3) The classic complaint is that evening programs show too much violence. (4) The police series entitled "Baretta," for example was rated one of the most violent evening series shown on evening television. (5) Adults were saying that young children should not be exposed to such episodes as a shooting or struggling fist fight. (6) This program was shown first at 10:00 PM and later at 9:00 PM. (7) Parents concerned about their child's welfare should be aware of the hours of sleep needed in a young person's childhood. (8) If a child is old enough to stay up until 11:00 PM or 10:00 PM I would think that seeing this violence would not be a shocking or disturbing incident.

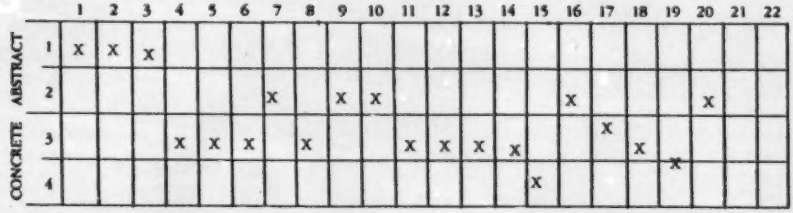
(9) The lasting impressions of such T.V. shows are said to be a knew knowledge of how to commit a crime. (10) I don't agree. (11) The police series "Starsky and Hutch" leaves me with a very different

impression. (12) Very little of how a crime was commited is included in the show. (13) Instead, it emphasizes the wrongness of the criminal's actions. (14) The heros, Starsky and Hutch, are sensitive, good men with conventional morals and values. (15) They show the meaning of true friendship, love, and being a good samaritan.

(16) The most violence I see on television is the nightly news. (17) The violence and depressing news out-weigh the light, happy stories. (18) Movies of wars, senseless dying and suffering is seen daily, with no good to them--just cold reality of our world's society. (19) These news casts are shown daily from 5:00 to 7:30 PM and 11:00 PM - 12:00 PM. (20) I think if people complain of the bad influence of tv they should look closer at where the influence is coming from.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1
Bottom Level 4
Total Range 3



A strong, well argued paper, making excellent use of factual evidence. This student is able to argue against commonly heard attacks on television by examining her own viewing experience closely. The concrete language in this paper is not an attempt to sway the reader through lively, vivid "showing," but rather to show by documenting: an important use of concrete statements in persuasion. This paper never becomes as concrete as Sample K in citing specific shows or incidents, but that level of specificity hardly seems necessary in the context. What is crucial to the argument is such information as the hours of Baretta and the evening news.

Sample K

Topic A - Holistic Score: 3 + 6 = Discrepancy

(1) Television is one of America's favorite pastimes. (2) Sitting glued to the T.V. for hours, stuffing ourselves with mostly junk foods, we are

influenced by commercials and programs. (3) Commercials urge us, the public, to buy sweet cereals, and handydandy appliances. (4) The programs, on the other hand make us aware of crime, sex and divorces. (5) The children, in our society, are the people who television is having the most negative effect on.

(6) Commericals make children believe that sweet cereals are nutritious. (7) For example, children like the kucoo-bird in the commerical for coco-puffs, associating it with the cereal, believing that the bird is right when he says the cereal's full of vitamins. (8) Other commericals for battery operated dolls that walk, sing and cry or trucks that are unbreakable are set-up in such a way so that children feel they are a necessity to their happiness.

(9) Actually, these commercials are the better side of television. (10) During programs such as "All in the Family," youngsters see Archy yell and scream at Edith, call his son-in-law a meathead, and then make his daughter cry. (11) After watching this program children, thinking nothing is wrong with their actions, shout at each other in loud voices and call each other meatheads. (12) Another show, with a great deal of yelling and screaming, plus hitting is "Laverne and Sherley". (13) In this show though, there is usually a positive point. (14) In one particular show, Sherley thinks she's adopted but after breaking into the hospital to find her birth records & impersinating a doctor Sherley realizes that it doesn't matter if she's adopted or not. (15) She learns that it is who raised her and gave her love not a piece of paper that is important. (16) But does this valuable lesson make up for the violence?

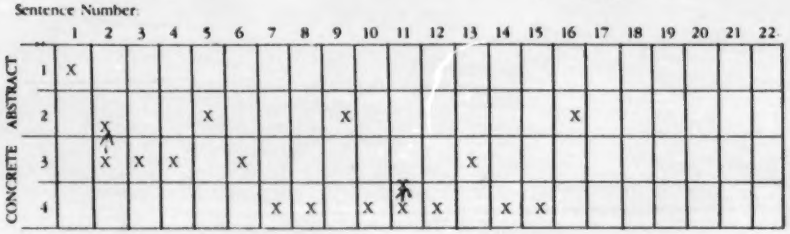
The first reader of this paper scored it a "3" indicating not only that raters get tired or make mistakes, but also that this level of concreteness may not be as appealing to some readers as others. While some teachers value the introduction of lively specifics into abstract argument, others may see these details as padding. The reader who scored this paper low may have just come from a paper like Sample L. The very clear organization of this paper, attacking first the influence of T.V commercials and second the influence of programs, appealed to two readers. The use of concrete details in the second sentence carries a judgment that is never made explicit but vividly evokes the passive consumption of things that aren't good for us. What is freshest in this paper, however, is the choice of examples to support the notion that T.V. models a kind of violence that can be destructive. After numerous papers citing police dramas as being likely to incite one's younger brother to become a housebreaker, it was striking to hear family shows criticized for a different kind of violence. The student sees that these shows

often make a "positive point" but wonders whether this compensates for the shouting. Although we may not share the student's view that T.V. should show good families saying only kind things to one another, the student uses her examples tellingly to make her argument.

This is a posttest essay of a student in Caplan's experimental class. This kind of close observation of experience to make a point is typical of the writing these students begin to produce.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1 / Bottom Level 4 / Total Range 3



Sample L

Topic B - Holistic Score 6 + 6 = 12

(1) Throughout the ages, man has exhibited authority over women. (2) He has always had more rights, better jobs, and easier lifestyles. (3) It is only obvious to all that it is more beneficial, and consequently better, to be a man than to be a woman.

(4) Until recently, man has never given the power to vote or hold political office to women. (5) The fact that this has changed does not, however, change the firmly rooted attitudes of many Americans. (6) Many people will still not vote for a woman for congress, even if she is the better candidate. (7) These people cannot be open-minded enough to even think that a woman could be more influential in Washington than a man.

(8) There is also evidence that a man will get certain job advantages over a woman. (9) Quite a number of times two equally qualified people will be up for the same job, and, if they are of the opposite sex, the man will get the job. (10) There are even times when a less qualified man will win the position. (11) Of course, there are also more jobs open to men. (12) Jobs dealing with a certain amount of

physical strength will usually be given to men. (13) Whereas, jobs requiring more skill than anything may be given to either.

It is perhaps surprising that this paper should receive the top score from both its readers. In a rapid impression marking, it would be easy for a reader to miss the sophisticated observations of the second paragraph, and this kind of succinctness can often work against a student. The first paragraph, however, makes it clear that this student understands that inequalities in the treatment of women and men do not imply that men are better--she dispenses with the potential ambiguity of the topic which caused the writer of Sample I so much difficulty. As with Sample I, this paper does not appear to suffer from its lack of level four sentences. The superior manipulation of abstractions in a tight and convincing argument is sufficiently impressive to readers who appreciate that conciseness here is not lack of development. Although the writing in the third paragraph does not compare with that of Sample H on the same point, and the ending trails off, the writer has deftly sketched the manner in which the cards are stacked against women and answered the opposition who might claim women *have* achieved equality.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1
Bottom Level 3
Total Range 2

Sentence Number

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
ABSTRACT	1			X																			
	2	X	X		X				X			X											
CONCRETE	3					X	X	X		X	X		X	X									
	4																						

Sample M

Topic B - Holistic Score: 6 + 6 = 12

(1) Now a days, there seems not to be as big a difference between the roles of men and women. (2) Women are being noticed more as the equals of men in work and at home. (3) But I agree that it is better to be a woman than a man from a social standpoint.

(4) Being a woman, now, means one can do anything or almost anything she wants. (5) Women are being let into West Point and are becoming

engineers, taxi drivers, and carpenters. (6) They are gaining the respect of men in many other fields as well. (7) However, a woman can still stay at home and raise a family without being looked-down-on or being an outcast. (8) Also, womens sports have been growing rapidly. (9) Though they probably won't become favored over men's sports, they give the athletic women a chance to be herself and prove herself when playing a co-ed game.

(10) On the other hand men seem to be trying harder to out-do women at work and at play. (11) Though many so called "pigs" have outwardly changed their attitudes toward women, inwardly they still think themselves better (12) This causes them to work harder to prove their old-fashioned way of thinking. (13) Men still have the chance at occupations and colleges that are just recently being opened to women, but men are not accepted eagerly by the rest of society when they play the role of "house-wife." (14) People are not used to men who would rather stay at home and raise children while their wife supports them.

(15) Women have worked hard to get where they are today but they had to fight men all the way. (16) It has paid off though because now a woman can do as she pleases. (17) Men, however, made the dumb mistake of fighting against women's rights instead of changing society's view of themselves. (18) Now, if a man stays at home and does the household chores while his wife supports him, people think he is wierd or gay, but if a women is seen working at a construction site, they say, "there's a liberated woman."

This student is one of a very few who argued that men's insistence on their rights has worked to their disadvantage. The student reveals a number of abilities associated with more mature and experienced writers which cannot be reduced to counts of words-per-T-unit or classification of abstraction levels. Notice that this student does not rely on the five-paragraph essay format, which would not be a fluid enough structure to draw the particular comparison this student wishes to make.

Sample N

Pretest of Student in Experimental Group

Topic B - Holistic Score: 4 + 4 = 8 See Posttest, Sample O

(1) I disagree with this statement. (2) It is far more better to be a man than it is to be a woman. (3) Sports are a good reason because there is far less chance for a woman to become a star football or baseball player. (4) Sports are a very important part of

most americans live. (5) With the present day statis there aren't many big money sports in which a woman can participate. (6) For example, baseball, basketball, football and many other sports don't include women. (7) There may be teams or leagues in which a woman may join yet these leagues aren't as well known.

(8) With the way crime and violence is rising in America and all over the world it seems the male has the advantage. (9) Women are more apt to be attacked by an assailent. (10) Also if a helpless woman is attacked she has very little chance of getting out of trouble. (11) However a man is usually stronger than a woman and has a chance of fighting back with more success. (12) Rape can be a very trying experience for a woman. (13) The after effects are mainly difficult and painful for a woman.

(14) This whole trouble about abortion seems to bother women more than it does men. (15) If a girl gets pregnant, she has no where to turn if her boyfriend leaves. (16) She can be ridiculed by her society and thought down upon.

(17) Women seem to have to look a certain way and they must keep up their appearance. (18) A man can gain a little weight and not comb his hair and still go unoticed. (19) However society has put the woman into the role that she must stay well kept. (20) For example, she is more noticed if her hair isn't combed than a man would be noticed.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1 / Bottom Level 4 / Total Range 3

Sentence Number:

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
ABSTRACT	1	x	x																				
	2			x	x				x								x						
	3			x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x			
CONCRETE	4																		x		x		

Sample O

Posttest of Student in Experimental Group

Topic A - Holistic Score: 6 + 5 = 11 See Pretest, Sample N

(1) Television is a good influence on everybody. (2) One may to let out fierce agressions, develope fantasy, and learn some unknown facts by watching this multipurpose reciprocal.

(3) When dad comes home from work, tensed out, upset and ready to explode into rage when the first upsetting happening occurs, he may take all of his anger out on the kids, his loving wife and even the dog. (4) However there is an alternative, for example, he could turn on the T.V. and watch a boxing match or a violent police story. (5) By doing this, Dad could place himself in the vengefull positions of one of the boxers or actors and then, release his violent flurries without hurting his family.

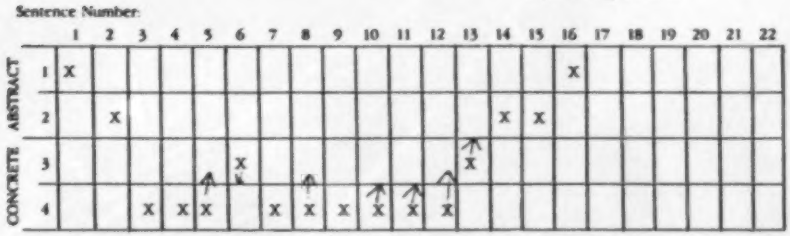
(6) If one had a dream of skiing down a famous slope in the Sierras, but knew this fantisy couldn't come true, he could turn on the Television set and watch a documentary on skiing. (7) Dreaming of future times, this person could view some expert skier, perfect in form, spinning, sliding and jumping down the slopes. 8) By placing himself in the position of the skiier, just as Dad had done in the paragraph above, he could live his fantisy, skiing and having a good time on the slopes.

(9) Mother is still asleep upstairs, comfortable warm and pacified in her bed. (10) She need not worry about Junior, restless misshtevious because he is down stairs watching his favorite T.V. program, Sesame Street. (11) He won't wake up mom because this box of amusement has him in it's gripps. (12) Beside's keeping Junior from walking on his mothers body, sleeping and dreaming of sleep, crashed out in bed, this program he's watching will teach him as well as amuse or entertain him. (13) Television acts as a portable teacher who is always on time to teach, every morning. (14) More and more young students are beginning school with more knowledge of the many shows designed to inform and entertain children.

(15) This happy family has a very important instrument that teaches, fanticises, and helps releave unwanted anxieties. (16) With some well known bad effects, television still provides an important ability to do almost anything you want it to.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1
Bottom Level 4
Total Range 3



This student provides on of the clearest examples of the kind of change likely to be brought about by conscientious application of the Caplan program. The student drops the point of view that demands statements about people in general, or children in general, or the general effects of crime shows or educational programs. Focusing on hypothetical individuals in particular kinds of moments, he is able to create the vision of a "happy family" which is benefitting from television in specific ways. Although some awkwardness results ("just as Dad had done in the paragraph above," sentence eight), the overall effect is quite convincing. Sentence sixteen gives a nod to the opposing position, strengthening the essay further.

Comparing the tone and point of view in this paper to the same student's pretest, we see that this student already had some notion of the need for concrete examples to support general propositions. He sounds in the pretest, however, as if he is suffering from unfamiliarity with the language of exposition--a common problem for students this age. ("It is far more better..." "Sports are a good reason because..." These infelicities do not appear in this student's personal narrative writing.) The Caplan program offered this student and others an alternative way to mount a persuasive argument by evoking visions of concrete scenes and experiences. Eventually the student will need to master the more abstract language he is beginning to use in Sample N, but he will in the meantime have an effective tool for communication--and will always have an alternative style for making an argument--a style which may be more appealing in informal persuasion than the academic style he attempts in the pretest.

Sample P

Demonstration Abstraction Analysis: Discrepancy Model

Topic B - Holistic Score: 5 + 4 = 9

(1) It is better to be a woman than a man for many different reasons. (2) One reason is that women have more advantages than men. (3) For one thing, the man always has to make the first move when it comes to dating. (4) They are the ones that have to have the money. (5) Women get to work and keep their money while the men spend it on women when they go out.

(6) Another thing that women can that men cannot is have babies. (7) It is a known fact that men cannot have babies so they would never get to know the joys of morning sickness, labor pains or the most important part, eating food such as: ice cream and pickles or anchovies and apple pie. (8) They will never get to taste the gourmet foods you crave when your pregnant. (9) On the serious side, they will never get to experience the miracle of giving birth.

(10) Having babies, is not the only thing women are good at.

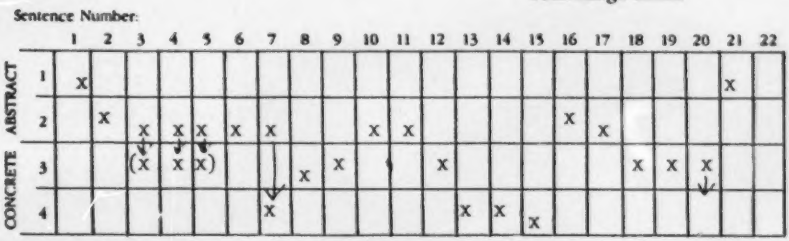
(11) On many an occasion women have proved to be better actors than men. (12) An example of this would be when a women gets a ticket. (13) They often try such things as crying to the officer, telling the officer that it wasn't her that was speeding, it was the rest of the freeway. (14) And, if all else fails she will offer to buy eighty tickets to the policeman's ball.

(15) Most of the time, the policeman falls for this and lets the woman off with just a warning. (16) This proves something else about women. (17) They're smarter than men. (18) In high school boys will not usually try as much as girls. (19) They think is takes away their manhood, to do homework. (20) So, while the girls are graduating the boys are playing football, baseball, etc.

(21) The following are just a few of the reasons that explain why women are better than men.

LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION ANALYSIS

Number of Different Abstraction Levels Used: Top Level 1
Bottom Level 4
Total Range 3



There are two ways to classify sentences three to five, on the subject of dating. Sentence three can be read as parallel in abstraction level to sentence six: "Another thing men cannot have is babies." All the elaborations of sentence three, the disadvantages the man experiences while dating, are at the same abstraction level. One reader suggested that there was a missing level two abstraction which could occur between sentences two and three: "For one thing, the man has several disadvantages when it comes to dating." Then the following sentences explaining that he has to make the first move and has to provide the money could all be read as level three. This interpretation would make the classification of this student's writing more parallel to the abstraction classification of other student papers. This student, however, does not separate out a level two statement on the subject of dating as she does on the subject of child-bearing, but rather incorporates levels two and three into each of the sentences, three to five. It was this kind of paper that led readers to develop a system of drawing arrows where sentences move across abstraction levels. For purposes of this study, the presence of level four sentences is of more interest than the distribution of sentences at other levels. For further research it might be useful to refine definitions of each abstraction level to make clear decisions possible in each case.